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## *Aspects of Italy Since the War*

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## Main Currents in Italian Fiction Today

ITALO CALVINO

[One of the best and most industrious contemporary Italian novelists, Italo Calvino has in the last three or four years published two novels (*Il barone rampante* and *Il cavaliere inesistente*) and his collected short stories (*I racconti*). While in Italy he has been honored with the Viareggio and Bagutta prizes, in this country it has been only very recently, with the publication of *Baron in the Trees*, that he has become widely known. This year he made an extensive tour of America, delivering lectures and exploring the academies and cultural centers. His impressions have been appearing in the new review *ABC* edited by Gaetano Baldacci.]

For several months now I have been visiting this country and I am often asked to speak of contemporary Italian literature in public or in private. Each time this happens I feel that I have to approach my subject anew to make a new definition. I have given a few lectures on Italian literature and each time I have to rewrite my lecture. The more I learn about this country, so different from mine, the further I go in a day by day comparison of two civilizations, and the more points of contact I find between our problems and yours, the more I have to change my views. An aspect that seemed essential at first later becomes secondary, a point that I had overlooked becomes the key by which to interpret all the rest. I believe that Italian literature is one of the richest and most alive today, but the more I believe it, the harder it is for me to describe it. It is like describing the Phoenix.

I am often envious of a French colleague who is visiting America on the same kind of grant from the Ford Foundation as I have. When they ask him to speak of French Literature, he has something precise to speak of: the *nouveau roman*, the *école du regard*; he can define with exactness the literary school to which he belongs. What

can I do, I who belong to no literary school? How can I speak of a literature like that of Italy, which today cannot be said to contain any real school or currents, but only the complex personalities of writers who are very different one from the other? Perhaps I could pretend that my personal idea of literature is a school in itself (to which I am the only adherent): but how would I define it, since up to now all I have done has been to contradict the definitions that critics have given of me? In the international market of literature, the French have always pushed their products with labels that have become immediately popular; fifteen years ago it was Existentialism, twenty-five years ago Surrealism. On the other hand, the Italians want to sell a commodity that won't let itself be defined. I would say that the more concrete and solid this commodity is the more it escapes definition. It is true that when Italian literature tried to be the literature of the ineffable, twenty or twenty-five years ago, it did have the label of a school: *ermetismo*. When some fifteen years ago, it tried to be the literature of the instinctive and the elementary world, it also had the label of a school: *neo-realismo*.

Neo-realism can be said to be one of the rare Italian cultural movements of which the American public has been aware (more through the motion-picture than through literature) and we can take it as a point of departure for our analysis. This is also an autobiographical beginning, because it was in that very climate that I took my first steps and every discussion of mine must start there. It must start above all with the activity in the forties of two writers, Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini. To speak of them as true neo-realists isn't quite correct: if Cesare Pavese ended up accepting that definition in his last years, Elio Vittorini used it only in a negative sense. My starting point, therefore, is not a school but an epoch and a climate; the influence of two very different writers who had in common some fundamental preferences as to style and content; and foremost among these was an interest in twentieth-century American Literature.

I can, therefore, give you the clearest definition of that



literary climate by trying to explain what America — the America of Melville, of Hawthorne, of Whitman, of Mark Twain, of Sherwood Anderson, of the Lost Generation, of the Thirties — meant to them and to us — the younger readers of their translations and essays.

For Pavese, America was a country which had built a literature bound to the doings of men, the hunting of whales, the planting of cornfields, the building of industrial cities; thus creating new myths that had the force of primordial symbols of consciousness, and creating a new poetic language from the vernacular.

For Vittorini, American literature was an enormous reserve of natural vitality, an ideal battlefield for the contest between new stylistic inventions and academic traditions, between passions of weariness and fury and the weight of inveterate hypocrisies and morals.

For both of them, American literature, which is so far from our tradition, let us approach that tradition in a new spirit; and it was with different eyes that we reread Giovanni Verga, the Sicilian novelist of the late nineteenth century, with his miraculous modernity of language.

Political reasons — in those last years of Fascism — were mixed with literary ones. America was a gigantic allegory of our Italian problems at that time, of our good qualities and our bad, of our conservatism and our need for rebellion, of our South and our North, of our mosaic of peoples and dialects, of Pavese's Piedmont and Vittorini's Sicily; it was a theater where we saw rehearsed in an explicit and extreme manner dramas not dissimilar to our own, those hidden dramas of which we were forbidden to speak.

We grew up in tragic times and it was natural that our passion for literature should become one with our passion for the fate of the world. But it has always been just as clear to us, too, that literature and politics should not be mixed. We searched for images of our world, looking for something that in the sphere of words and forms would equal the force and tragedy of our time. My analysis would be one-sided if I did not add that we also drew our lessons

from that movement in Italian cultural life that is called *hermeticism*. Not by chance was Eugenio Montale the poet of our youth. His poems — closed, hard, difficult, with no allusion to any history but an individual and interior one — were our starting point. His stony universe, dry, glacial, negative, without illusions, was for us the only solid earth into which we could sink our roots. The rigor of Montale's poetry, the rigor of Giorgio Morandi's paintings, those still lifes of bottles in which the cold exactness of light envelops the humble reality of things, the rigor of Romano Bilenchi's fiction, the absolute dryness of his meager provincial stories; this was our inheritance from their "hermeticism." It is not a meager inheritance: Montale, Morandi, and Bilenchi taught us to hold to the essential in everything; they taught us that what we can be sure of is very little and must be endured to the very end. It was a lesson in stoicism.

Having absorbed this literary background we found ourselves living in an extraordinary season of the Italian spirit, that which accompanied and followed the Resistance, the victorious popular fight against Fascism. It was a raw and miraculous time, a unique awakening in our history, not even during the Risorgimento were there such general participation, such examples of abnegation and of courage, such fervor of intelligence and thought. The Resistance made us believe in the possibility of an epic literature, charged with an energy at the same time rational and vital, social and existential, collective and autobiographic: a *literature of tension*. And the kind of *tension* that animates the works of Pavese and Vittorini is the most precious and inimitable fruit of that climate: for Pavese, it was an interior tension of intimate, hidden pain that transmits its fire to the everyday happenings of city life and to a style based on spoken slang; for Vittorini it was an outwardly directed tension, resulting in the invention of mythical images for our time and of a language that describes a new area of reality.

Pavese's creative work, consisting of a series of short novels forming the most packed and dramatic fiction cycle



of modern Italy, was broken off by his suicide in 1950. Vittorini's creative work, which includes a novel which can be considered the manifesto of the new literature, *Conversazione in Sicilia* (written between 1937 and 1940), has been interrupted by a long silence; for several years he has spoken only as a critic and sponsor of new writers (and he now edits with me the quarterly *Menabò*). The silencing of these two creative voices coincided with the end of the first phase of postwar Italian literature.

We must admit that in this first post-war phase the voices of the few true writers were drowned out by a flood of crude productions anonymous shouts, unripe attempts, raw reports of experience, bare documentations of popular life, naturalistic regional sketches, in which a rhetoric of realism was superimposed on reality. All this material — good and bad together — was characteristic of what has been called "Italian neo-realism." Even with all its defects, it was a literary epoch full of life, at least for the first ten or perhaps five years after the war. Among its best fruits were the Neapolitan stories of Domenico Rea. When this wave of popular vitality ceased, it was due partly to the change in the political situation; partly, too, to the need felt by young writers to look more deeply into things. Over and above a purely emotional consciousness of reality there was the need for a more complex and reflective consciousness.

This brings us up to today. What are the present patterns of Italian literature, especially in the field that is most familiar to me, the novel? I would say that there are three main currents all have, with deep roots in Italian tradition, and all continue and transform the initial epic push of the literature of the Resistance: three ways for the novelist to go in a moment of uncertain historical prospects.

The first way I could define as the replacement of the epic with the elegy, which involves the exploration of sentiment and psychology in a melancholy mood. And this is a traditional situation in Italian literature: it occurs in all the moments of ebb and flow of our history; every time action dies out, literature has retreated from epic to elegy,

finding there, sometimes, a greater truth. Today the elegiac spirit shows itself in everyday prose, without lyrical and sublime halos, and in this is its strength. Meanwhile it is significant that the only Italian writer of today whose work has the aspect of a popular "human comedy," an epic of the poor sections of Florence, Vasco Pratolini, is a writer of sentimental, idyllic, elegiac nature.

This vein becomes more bitter in another Tuscan writer, Carlo Cassola. His best story, "Il taglio del bosco" ("Woodchopping"), tells of a charcoal-burner who, recently widowed, goes with a group of companions to chop wood in the Appennines: outwardly it is a bare chronicle of workdays, but underneath, implicit but almost withheld, there is always the feeling of absolute sorrow expressed with the moderate levity of a Greek lyric. It is significant that the two most important Italian writers who are today in their forties, Carlo Cassola and Giorgio Bassani, share a common theme in most of their stories and novels: the melancholy of a provincial life that has closed in again about existence after the great moment of truth represented by the Resistance. Cassola is a Tuscan from Volterra; his world is one of artisans and of the provincial lower middle class: a simple world, in which the simple sentiments and phrases of everyday conversation are recorded with scrupulous fidelity. Cassola's secret is in this gray tone, in this lowered voice, in this rigorous chronicling of an ordinary day, and it is from this that arises the sense of despair and, at the same time, the force that sustains his novels.

Giorgio Bassani, on the other hand, writes of the Jewish middle-class in the city of Ferrara: the lives of individuals and families, the years of racial persecution, the German occupation, and the Resistance reflected in the microcosm of a provincial society, and tragedy has the melancholy of an old faded photograph. In the story "Una lapide in via Mazzini" ("The Memorial Stone on Mazzini Street"), a young Jew returns from a German concentration camp and immediately wants to forget everything, to go back to being the elegant, well-to-do young man he once was, thus scandalizing his city with his refusal to remember the past. But as



soon as he perceives that it is the entire city that has forgotten, the entire city that wants to live as if those things had not happened, he puts his prisoner's garb back on and appears thus in the elegant streets on Sunday, forcing his image, like that of a ghost, on his fellow-citizens who have returned to their placid egoism.

In both Cassola and Bassani, the story is born from the contrast between epic and elegiac elements: between the moral tension that the Resistance represented in individual lives and collective history, and the elegiac influence of time which lulls to sleep, buries, and cancels out everything. And it is this latter that is the true victor.

Behind those writers, we hear the poet's voice, sad and classic, of Umberto Saba, whose melancholy intelligence stands in opposition to the evil of the world. A quite optimistic intelligence on the contrary, where melancholy is redeemed by a cosmic love for everything, is the secret of Carlo Levi, of his gentle and concise style.

Carlo Levi, the first writer from the North to interpret the South, had a strong impact on Southern literature itself. The lyric, elegiac vein of the Southern tradition, which had already found modern expression in Corrado Alvaro's prose and Salvatore Quasimodo's poetry, now took on a tone of reflection and reasoning. These qualities are shared by two Southern writers who may be said to be opposite personalities, two writers whose books were published posthumously: Rocco Scotellaro and Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. Scotellaro was a young poet and novelist who during his short life (he died of a heart attack at thirty) tried most of the various means of expression of our generation. He was a boy from a peasant family in a little South Italian village, Tricarico, who had studied and become a writer and poet at the same time that he was a labor organizer for the peasants, a student of the problems of his land, and the mayor of his village. He has left a book of verse, an impressive collection of the lives of peasants told by themselves, and an unfinished novel. This novel of Rocco Scotellaro is the story of a resistance that was defeated: the protagonist is forced to leave his post as mayor after an



action brought against him by his adversaries and he retires to the vineyard of his boyhood; the elegiac mood of memory veils the bitterness of the end of an epic period.

An unfinished novel was also left by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, a figure who can be said to be diametrically opposed to Scotellaro. He was an elderly Sicilian prince, very cultivated and of great delicacy, modesty, and gentility. He wrote *Il Gattopardo* ( *The Leopard* ), a historical novel set in Sicily at the time of the Risorgimento, a novel of nineteenth century construction which, however, uses many refined techniques of modern literature. The elderly Sicilian prince tells us with intelligence and finesse that he doesn't believe in progress, in the movement of history: his elegy is full of skepticism and renunciation. Scotellaro's elegy, on the contrary — green, unripe, devoid of that flavor of the antique that is the charm of Lampedusa's novel — conserves intact like a glowing ember the fire of his moral tension.

So much for the first solution — there is a second which has been tried by some Italian writers: that is to preserve the existential and historical tension which I mentioned before, by finding it in language; by combining the dialect, the spoken popular idiom, with literary language. We may call this a literature of linguistic tension. It is effected, not by publishing rough texts by almost unlettered writers — as had previously been done — but through the craft of the trained writer, who employs dialect as a particular way of expression, with all the resources of an accomplished formal consciousness. This, too, is a traditional solution for a literature like that of Italy which in times of crisis has always renewed itself by plunging into the vernacular. We may ask, however, whether this return to the rougher, simpler, and more limited expressions of dialect is the right way to give an image of the more and more complex world we live in. Personally, I don't believe that it is, but I am always ready to acknowledge any individual successful effort.

The fruits of the first explosion of a crude and raw neo-realism are now being garnered by a writer who is

among the most literate and rational of the new generation: Pier Paolo Pasolini. In this country, I have heard Pasolini spoken of as the Italian representative of the Beat Generation. But although he is interested in the world of juvenile delinquency and in the crudest aspects of sexual life, Pasolini is quite the opposite of the Beatniks as to cultural background. His novels are written in the dialect, or better, the jargon, of the juvenile delinquents of the suburbs of Rome, but his true interest in this language is that of a philologist and linguistic sociologist, and, at the same time, that of a refined lyric poet. In his novels, and above all in his non-dialect poetry (in which he has revived the metric forms and rhymes of our ancient tradition), Pasolini deliberately sets against each other his idea of human life as instinctive sensual joy and his idea of morality, of the duties dictated by history. In both of these ideas and especially in their antithesis, there is still a good deal of intellectual stubbornness and a good deal of youthful romantic fervor: but for this very reason Pasolini is one of the most significant figures in the new Italian literature.

The master to whom Pasolini, with his linguistic experiments, is most closely related is the now elderly Carlo Emilio Gadda, who nonetheless represents the most avant-garde point in Italian literature, and whose work can be put alongside similar European examples. Gadda's language is a Babel, or rather a stratification, of all languages: dialects, especially those of Milan and Rome, the parlance of the old literary tradition, and bureaucratic formulas, all with a thousand modulations and inflections that seem either the virtuosities of a great musician or the impatient outbursts of a neurotic. Although many compare him with James Joyce, Gadda seems to be nearer to François Rabelais. His major novel, *Quer Pasticciaccio Brutto de Via Merulana* (That Awful Mess on Via Merulana), upon which he had been working for about twenty years, is a kind of detective story in which all Rome boils as if in an immense cauldron. In a way that is paradoxical and obsessed, there is sounded in Gadda one of contemporary Italy's most modern notes, suspended between popular wit, tradition, rationality, and

neurosis. In a recent radio talk on the modern building industry, Gadda (who is an engineer by profession) described how homes of reinforced concrete are built, and how they cannot be insulated from noises, with the clarity of a seventeenth century science prose writer; then he went on to describe the physiological effects of noise on the brain and the nervous system; finally he exploded in a series of verbal fireworks against the noises of city life in one of his most personal outbursts of misanthropy. Is it in this odd, solitary and hypersensitive stylist that we will find the Italian voice that most nearly responds to the spirit of our time?

Even our most famous novelist, Alberto Moravia, has now placed himself in this group. In his *Roman Tales*, and in his last novel, *La Ciociara*, Moravia's language largely follows the dialect of the Roman people. In relation to Gadda and Pasolini we have spoken of *dialectal tension*, the mark of Moravia's dialect, on the other hand, is the easing of tension. The voice of his characters is that of the laziest and most apathetic kind of men: this is at the same time the limitation and the strength of his work. Moravia knows well how to express moral laziness, and the cold exactitude with which he represents this condition is the best quality in his fiction.

At this point some among you will think that the moment has come for me to talk about my personal position in this landscape; and I shall do so. Besides the two currents to which I have already referred, the elegiac and the dialectal, a third exists which I may call presentation through fantasy or, better, the tension of imagination. It might be possible to include in this group very different writers of contemporary Italy, from Palazzeschi to Landolfi and Elsa Morante and perhaps even Buzzati. But, if you will, I shall speak instead about the experience I know best: my own.

I, too, am one of the writers who took his impetus from literature of the Resistance, but what I did not want to renounce was its epic, adventurous grasp, the combination of physical and moral strength. As the images of contemporary life no longer satisfied this need of mine, it was for me a natural solution to create fanciful adventures, out-



side of our time, away from reality. For instance, I imagined an eighteenth century gentleman who spent all his life climbing about in trees; a soldier split in half by a cannon ball who goes on living; a medieval warrior who is only an empty suit of armor but fights perfectly.

Why do I write stories like these? I might say that I like action more than inaction, assertion more than resignation, the exceptional more than the usual. I, too, have written and do write realistic stories. My first stories and my first novel dealt with partisan fighting, with a highly colored and adventurous world where tragedy and laughter were mingled. Reality as I see it daily no longer gives me images full of that energy which I like to express. I have never given up writing realistic stories: I have written, for instance, a short novel about a man who, seeing the landscape of his beloved Riviera spoiled by the robber barons of the construction business, and seeing too the impossibility of fighting them, tries to become the most cynical speculator himself; I have written the story of a man who, believing it impossible to escape from the smog of the big cities, lets the smog pervade his life. But although I fill these stories with all the irony possible, they always turn out a bit too sad; and so, in my fiction, I feel the need of alternating realistic stories with fanciful ones.

I have also made a study of folk tales and have published (in Italy) a large collection of fables from all the regions of Italy, with a long introduction. What interests me in the fable is the linear treatment of the narration, its rhythm, and the manner in which the meaning of a life is expressed in a synthesis of facts, of trials to overcome, of supreme moments. And so I have become interested in the relationship between the fable and the oldest novel forms; in, for instance, the novel of chivalry of the Middle Ages, and the great chivalric poems of our Renaissance, such as *Orlando Furioso*.

Of all the poets of our tradition, the one I feel nearest to me and at the same time most obscurely fascinating, is Ludovico Ariosto. I never tire of rereading him. He is so absolutely limpid and cheerful and carefree, and yet, at

bottom, so mysterious, so skillful in hiding his feelings; an unbeliever of the sixteenth century who drew from Renaissance culture a sense of reality without illusions. While Machiavelli founds upon this disenchanted notion of humanity a harsh idea of political science, Ariosto persists in creating a fable.

I think that Ariosto's psychological situation in relation to the literature of chivalry was not so far from the one I found myself in in regard to the contemporary novel of action and political engagement. From the very beginning I chose Hemingway and Malraux as teachers, but unconsciously I found I was approaching them with the same attitude (and it should be clear that I'm not speaking now of their poetic value) with which Ariosto approached the romances of chivalry. Ariosto sees these romances through a veil of irony and fantastic transfiguration but, nonetheless, he never undervalues the fundamental virtues they express, never debases the idea of man that animates them, even if there remains nothing for him to do but change them into a brilliant, fluid game. Ariosto, so far from the tragic depth that Cervantes would have in the next century, but still so sad in his continual exercise of levity and elegance; Ariosto, so skillful in building octave upon octave, with an unfailing ironic counterpoint in the last rhymed couplet, so skillful as to give now and then the sense of obsessive stubbornness in an insane undertaking; Ariosto, so full of love for life, so sensual, so realistic, so human . . .

Is my love for Ariosto an evasion of our times? I believe not. He teaches us how the mind lives by fantasy, irony, and formal accuracy; how none of these qualities is an end in itself but how they can become part of a conception of the world and helps us to evaluate human vices and virtues. These are up-to-date lessons, necessary today in the age of electronic brains and spatial flights. It is an energy turned towards the future, not towards the past, I am certain, that moves Orlando, Angelica, Ruggiero, Bradamante, and Astolfo.

## Poor Rich and Rich Poor

GIANCARLO BUZZI

[Born in 1929, Giancarlo Buzzi was educated in Italian and French literature at Pavia, Strasbourg and Paris. Driven by a writer's curiosity to know the world, he gave up academic life and turned to commerce and industry. After working as a salesman, a producer of "fumetti," an editor of tourist publications and a publicity agent, he became part of the great communal experiment in northern Italy which the late Adriano Olivetti had sponsored. He has published a study of Grazia Deledda (1953) and a novel, *Il senatore* (1958). Recently he has been studying industrial sociology in the United States.

Because it seems in many ways indicative of present-day life in northern Italy, we are presenting an extract from Mr. Buzzi's second novel, *L'Amore mio italiano*, which has yet to be published in Italian. Its setting is a small town dominated by a large factory of the most modern and enlightened sort, much like the *comunità* established by Olivetti. The problems and attitudes it deals with are mainly those ironically created by prosperity and planning. Boredom, frustration and atrophy of the moral sense seem, according to the author, to be some of the results of "planned," or we might add "gracious," living.]

In our town there were no class struggles, even though there were in some sense or other both rich and poor. Not many poor people knew how to be poor, just as not all the rich were conscious of their own wealth. The line between poverty and wealth was so uncertain among us that people who came to visit the city were unable to discern it, and if they were sensitive people they even lost sleep over it; they racked their brains and pursued everyone, begging for explanations without getting to the bottom of things. This would take place on the surface, and underneath things went on as they do everywhere; at least the trade unionists of the old school, whom no one took seriously, said it was so. In our city the trade unionists reaped no laurels: most



people saw them as a thorn in the flesh and considered them busybodies and fools.

Undoubtedly the absence of clear-cut boundaries between poverty and wealth created problems. In no other place, probably, was so much shrewdness applied to the task of flushing out the poor or imposing on them striking marks of identity. Nothing is more discomforting to the rich than to see the poor not making a show of their poverty — worse, surely, than the moral or social obligation, which the rich in particular must observe, of feeling compassion for sickness and want. There was poverty among us, of course, because without it our town, like any other, could not have existed; but its survival was extraordinarily difficult. It demanded almost more sacrifice than wealth did. Only a few privileged people succeeded in being poor without effort. Many poor people in our city owned cars. How can one own a car and be sufficiently aware of his own poverty to act accordingly? The trade unionists, with or without cars, said that the automobile was insignificant; they invited the poor to abandon their toy and soberly affirm their class consciousness. Some tried to devise new definitions of poverty more applicable to the local situation. But the poor were quite bewildered. On the one hand they wanted to proclaim themselves poor and to agitate against the rich; on the other hand the idea appealed to them of passing themselves off as rich and being considered as such. The anguish of incomplete poverty or incomplete wealth raged in our little city . . . The rich did not really mind that the poor had cars, a sign of prosperity and a token of calm. They would sharply have resented it if, in spite of this, the poor had revolted. And yet they couldn't abide the poor who did not parade their proper rank.

In our town the rich would often stay at home when they were not at the office, and on Saturdays they would go away for the weekend. They knew each other, but gladly pretended not to; they played at being "citizens of a big city." They brushed past each other, in the neighborhood or in the corridors of the factory, looking each other up and down and quickly lowering their eyes, reading each other's

minds. But they did not greet each other — either as a game, or just because they were bored stiff with seeing and greeting each other. They would have given anything to see each other less often. While unhappy people usually love company, love to gather the largest possible clans together for mutual support, these people formed the narrowest cliques or simply sought solitude. They exchanged invitations grudgingly because they lived too close to each other, even on the same block. When they passed each other and turned their eyes askance, they would lower their heads inadvertently, overcome by a melancholy sense of their own humiliation. There were very few who did not lower their heads: they had to have at least a very powerful car, or one of foreign make, if not a chauffeur. They did not lower their heads, but addressed each other with faint, almost imperceptible, smiles and strode on, outdoors or along the corridors, with a punctilious air. When they bowed, the movement would raise their jackets slightly, uncovering a bit of backside. They tended to grow fat, and their backsides were voluminous. Their jowls were heavy and resolute, their hair cut short.

The spectacle of civic prosperity should only have tranquilized them; instead it sometimes irritated them to such a point that when they got together they made it the butt of their aggrieved diatribes. The poor! They would remark bitterly. Here there are no poor. It's better that way, of course. An oasis, this city is an oasis. Well? Isn't this the task to which intelligent people should devote themselves? So that there will be more and more oases, and finally no more oases, but peace and happiness everywhere?

They felt dispossessed, or about to be. The most ruthless were the newly rich. The poor were like apes, they displayed such cleverness in imitating the rich. How did they behave when they got more money? Did they buy more bread, meat, vegetables? Nothing of the kind: clothes. Nylons for their women: slips, stockings, brassieres. For themselves trousers, shoes, shirts, ties. And cars. An incredible number of cars. Abominable cars of low or medium horsepower. It turned out that the horsepower of the rich was not much greater than that of the poor: the rich in fact used

their money to buy more meat, fruit, vegetables, coffee, liquor, and put away a nest-egg for the future. Very rarely did some more enterprising rich man manage to own a car of superior enough horsepower to make the poor man bite the dust. He, too, had his troubles though, because there was no lack of underhandedness among the poor who sometimes, cagily exploiting the privilege of bachelorhood, would pamper themselves with preposterous cars and humiliate the identical horsepower — though encumbered with wives and children — of the rich. Then the rich stopped bothering about horsepower and bought cars of a certain make; the poor at first let them go ahead without entering into the competition, but before long they deprived them of this means of escape as well.

The poor had no desire to fight; if they fought, they fought wearily and never won, except when the rich admitted they were right to begin with. Or else they fought with completely different tactics from the usual: they tried to match the standard of life of the rich and merely made them lose their temper.

The rich defended themselves intrepidly. They moved to more expensive houses, but the poor joined them there as well, or else, by going into debt, they built themselves cute little villas, and the rich, stuck with their rented apartments, were furious.

It was therefore reasonable that they should reject the poor and refuse to become familiar with them. But since the poor were very numerous, the rich had to barricade themselves against the whole world and live like hermits. In their judgment of the poor, bewilderment and bitterness mingled in equal measure.

“These people,” thundered one of the rich men, “have no backbone! It’s a good thing, I admit, if it shows that they’re satisfied. But how awful it is to see laborers with no class consciousness.”

“If only they would still come and talk about Marx,” continued another.

“Here, my friend, the Marxists might just as well close



up shop. A far cry from class consciousness, proletariat, and all the rest!"

"Still," said the first, presenting the other side of the coin and pointing his pipe at his interlocutor, "what can you expect from workers who have lost class consciousness? More reasonable behavior, in well-fed men certain of the future, would be tranquillity and silence; but instead they go on grumbling."

"How wonderful." The wife of the first rich man smoothed her skirt over her nervous legs and made a little grimace to excuse her innocence. "That's as much as to say that the Marxists are defeated, isn't it?"

"Luisa!" grunted her husband, piercing her with a sharp glance, not so much because of what she had said as to let her know that butting into a discussion of this sort was incompatible with feminine charm. "What an original discovery! Everyone else knows that they are defeated, but they must begin to realize it themselves and blush that they are still playing around with romantic nonsense in this age of atomic energy, automation, and psychology."

"All of us without exception," observed the other, "look forward to a responsible society, a society without great inequalities . . ."

"With no more unemployed," put in the wife.

"A socialistic society, we might as well say," ventured the husband. "But it would be necessary to suppress fabrications and revolutionary babble ruthlessly. We would attain our goal more quickly. We are close to it here."

"Close to the goal?" The wife moved her bottom — which was sheathed tightly enough to permit one to guess the edge of her panties under her wrinkled skirt that widened from her thigh on down — to a corner not yet sat upon and therefore refreshingly cool, and in the process she exposed her round knees.

"It's obvious. The world is moving in that direction . . ." He was pointing out an ideal spot, distant in space and near in time. "We, fortunately, are quite aware of that and are working to build . . ."

"Exactly," she said, growing elated. "Rilke said it too:

We are working in the world of shadows, O Lord, to build for Thee, stone upon stone . . . Would you care for something else? You, Engineer, more ice?"

"We build houses for these dullards; cafeterias, nurseries. It's become a land of milk and honey."

"Well then," she came down from the clouds and pressed her fingers against her forehead half hidden by loose curls, "what are you complaining about?"

In our city the bitterness of the rich produced effects which were impressive even if they seemed small. At the factory they established hierarchical parking for automobiles: in the open air and under roofs, in the shade and in the sun, convenient and less convenient. First the president's car, then those of the vice-presidents, the general administrators, the managers, the clerks, and the laborers. Last came the sheds for motorcycles and bicycles, and the garages for buses. In the morning this hierarchy would take shape, woeful chess-board, only to disband in the evening when the various vehicles filed out to the residential districts or surrounding villages.

But above all, as the most virile test, the one most indicative of the worth of each particular individual, the rich had recourse to sex. They ensnared wives, lusted after virgins. The woman of superior rank or the tender young girl, captured and put to sexual exercise, besides gratifying the desire to sin, satisfied the desire for power. But it was indispensable, in order not to fall into the most searing disillusionment, to defer the joust indefinitely. In our town the rich were vigilant seigneurs and did not lay down their shields and armor even when they slept. They would have died or become prematurely aged if the women of our city had been less understanding and had universally demanded that each sexual act represent a substantial satisfaction of their hunger . . .

I had been living with Dina for five years in this city, which was traversed by a river that was almost always tranquil: the few times that it rose and flooded the shore, people would run to enjoy the spectacle from the bridge which

separated the old and new quarters. The water had a metallic color, greyish-green, especially where the river bed broadened to form a kind of lake on whose mirrored surface, which the breeze barely ruffled, the oarsmen's boats and slender canoes would venture on holidays: the lake was brilliant on sunny days, sandy and sad in the flood season.

This water was the mirror of the city. It wasn't a dashing river. It did not even seem to be an ancient river, on whose shores men might have fought and suffered, a river that carried along with it fables and memories. It flowed for its own sake, aloof, proud of its useless beauty which only on rare occasions found someone to discover and cherish it. Even the shores were high and inaccessible, or separated from the houses by meadows and fields, by thick hedges, so that only an occasional dog might go there to wash where the current turned back on itself and subsided in placid little pools or inlets.

They said that ours was a happy marriage, and we thought so too. We had been married young; I was just over twenty. We used to like working together. They said Dina was beautiful. "What a beautiful daughter," the neighbors would compliment her mother when she spent a few days with us. Dina's mother would hasten to tell me all about it, without presuming to extol her daughter, without maternal pride, but sure in her simple way that it would give me pleasure. In fact, I was pleased. I had never spoiled Dina with compliments, but I was happy that others judged her beautiful.

We knew each other perfectly; we knew the meaning of all our gestures. Our bodies knew each other. I think we worked hard at getting to know each other: the best years, when we were most absorbed in our eagerness to know each other, were those preceding our marriage. Dina lived in a villa surrounded by pine trees, full of dusty recesses, on the slope of a city by a lake. Openly by day and furtively by night I would go there. We made love often. Other things too, but above all we made love.

Until that time I had been in love only with Dina and not with any of the other women I had been with. But I



suffered from that, because I was sure of having a great deal of love in me, more than Dina could absorb.

Dina was small and slender, but juicy as a peach. Her blond hair, furrowed with brown streaks which the light would enhance, and rebellious to the comb, shadowed her big grey eyes (faithful mirrors of her mood) in which resided an inexhaustible fund of gaiety. When we embraced she was avid and fretful; it seemed unbelievable that she was the mother of my children. Each time I had her was a repetition of the violence of the first time. "Lucky you," my friends would intone, always the same refrain. "You didn't deserve her, a woman like Dina." They could not account for the freedom (too much, in their opinion) which Dina allowed me. They would shake their heads and say, "Born lucky."

Most of us worked in a large, very modern factory. Laborers and clerks, whether city dwellers or suburbanites, were provided with the essentials; so they confined themselves to uttering dulcet complaints, without going to extremes. The factory paid good salaries, rented clean and comfortable houses at nominal prices.

Round about us poverty was vanishing. It was strange, it made your head swim, to witness the triumph of prosperity. It spread like an oil stain; it did not smash the obstacles — poverty, ignorance, want, envy — but flowed around them, descended into their crevices and filled them to overflowing, slowly corroded the most resistant roots until the old worm-eaten constructions creaked and crumbled. The oil dulled the crash. A very potent liquid, this prosperity. A flood of prosperity, like one of those sullen rivers that stretch out at night in their beds and by morning have invaded the surrounding countryside, had now submerged the city; flotsam — at which the dazed survivors of a society in collapse might gape, torn between rancor and hope — came to the surface, destined to share the fate of all the rubbish already swallowed by the great flood.

Our city had previously been tenaciously defended against floods; it had tried erecting dikes and embankments. With these, indirectly, it protected its own human patrimony of sins. In fact, prosperity destroyed almost all pretexts

for sin: even envy, in the confines of the large factory which gave us work and bread, was less a sin than a physiological need for movement, a skeptical search for salvation which only certain imprudent people, pushing it beyond proper limits, succeeded in transforming into small incidents which could be quickly remedied. The weapons of the poor and of criminals, of the unjust and of the bread-hunters seemed blunted. Houses, small subsidiary factories, automobiles, new stores, many different kinds of food in stores and on tables. A few trade unionists of the old school, half-drowned by the flood, howled in dismay at the death of the working-class conscience. They were rather touching, like those scrawny horses that pull the few remaining carts in a metropolis of iron and cement. Every so often, as happens in a river flood when the level of water rises suddenly in preparation for an even more formidable invasion, the flood of prosperity submerged them up to their ears, and on the surface one saw only the small bubbles of their protest. They no longer heard, they fumbled about on the point of asphyxiation. When they re-emerged, some were discouraged at not seeing the familiar boundaries on the far horizon, and thus their ranks dwindled daily.

Our citizens did not like this, to tell the truth. They had always wanted sin to be a serious matter; they had always hoped to be able to offend — with complete consciousness of committing reprehensible acts and with palpable motivation — at least some of the commandments which the Lord dictated to Moses on the mount. They stared enviously at the inhabitants of other cities who sinned with tremendous freedom and with all the infinite variety of pretexts allowed to mortals and who found it easily possible to break all ten of the Lord's commandments. Of course they would not actually have wanted to be those citizens, since their palates had become accustomed to the honey of prosperity, but they would like to have had, along with prosperity, the same excuses for sin.

They had searched for years for some sort of sin that was not cancelled out by prosperity, and by the process of elimination they found it in sex. In our city, as a matter of

fact, the women were at bottom identical with those in the rest of the country — aside from the fact that many of them were not born here. They had faces, breasts, stomachs belonging to a larger fatherland. They had moved here and preserved unchanged — like the language which the cultured immigrant and his descendants speak on foreign soil — rules learned and practiced elsewhere.

Oh, ours was not a provincial city! Not a sunny and peaceful city, where proud and exciting women were pursued by the hungry looks of males intent on satisfying sexual desires which could not be gratified at café tables. No obscene talk among us, no irreverent laughter or rumpuses in questionable places. We were hard-working people and our habits were those of gentlemen, even if we had immigrated from crowded centers. Our sexuality was free of murky fantasies and covert lust.

The women, however — the women of this city — came from that world whose impalpable territory covers the whole peninsula regardless of differences in climate and custom. They had brought with them — most useful baggage — their rules and prejudices. What luck! How could sin be born without a context of moral principles to lean on and to oppose? Everyone knows that moral principles are not only the naked voice of God, but also abstractions and syntheses of human laws. So our city, turned toward the future, completely renounced the old world, except for certain abstract principles preserved thanks to the foresight of its women. This was the essence of our amorous city, without its distracting and justifying lust for bread. In this light and airy soil sin could take root, live, and prosper; it was a balm which assuaged the misery of men, which served to reinstate the image of death in a small universe that in other respects seemed to have banished it, sacrificing at the same time both the idea and the meaning of life. We are not given life without the foreboding thought of death. People die in sin; they are reborn by renouncing and repenting it.

The vital energy of our citizens, together with the will to power of the rich, now took refuge in sexual sin. Just



as the infirm whose only remaining sense is hearing will sharpen and strain it and never tire of listening, so the inhabitants of this city, stripped of any reasonable occasion for sinning, clung to sex. They died and were reborn, they experienced to the full the headiness of death and rebirth. Their sin, so pathetic because it was so difficult, and meritorious because it was so strenuous, was the inexhaustible desire to renew the miracle of the water of life, of a second resplendent life. Woman seemed at times to have reacquired the enchantment of that distant time when Satan spoke to her with winning words.

A partial solution was therefore found. If sin among us was monochromatic, if there were infinite little obstacles which made continuous operation arduous for sinners — nevertheless, we sinned. In short, there were sinners who sinned diligently, within the limits of possibility, and who often even made a show of their inclination or their loyalty to sin. Their clergymen had enough work to do without risking unpleasant or upsetting surprises; since there was not much imagination among our people and sins were known down to the last detail, one would never hear of bold experiments or unusual sinful combinations. The men of the law, in fact, were unemployed: the citizens of this temperate village committed canonical sins, which no investigator with human feelings would prosecute. As a consequence our men of law and order were jovial and easygoing; only a few — the usual ambitious sort found even in the best organized republics — combined affability with a touch of melancholy, owing to a frustration that could be cured only by transferring to an environment of more various crime. But sometimes they themselves began to sin in the same serene and gently inconsistent way as their fellow-citizens, in which case they swelled with even greater happiness and went around with radiant faces, betraying, along with a vague faith in their fellow man, their goodhumored forbearance.

Here, in this sinful little city, I fell in love with Daniela. I fell in love with her without engendering a trace of sin in my feelings. I had never been capable of sinning and this incapacity had in the course of time become more of a

burden than a privilege. It was like an inexorable daily deduction from riches of which I myself was ignorant: it was even as if I were the thief, as if I were cheating myself minute by minute of a human prerogative which, in childhood and in adolescence, should also have been mine.

## Literary Criticism in Postwar Italy

ALDO SCAGLIONE

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It is not unreasonable to look upon the last hundred years in the history of western culture as the golden age of literary criticism. This discipline, in one form or another, has not been unrepresented at any moment of our past, but we are fully entitled to regard modern criticism as the most intense and productive, the theoretically most adequate and methodically most refined of all times. In the development of this discipline — art or science as one may prefer to consider it — Italy has played an outstanding role. If we consider the Renaissance as the hatching ground of the modern spirit in western culture, Italy's priority in transmitting and interpreting the critical consciousness of the classics, as well as in shaping what was to become the classicist school of criticism, is undeniable. Spingarn's ideas on the subject were stated in what still rates as an outstanding specimen of historical research.<sup>1</sup>

If, on the other hand, we agree, as we well may, that the Romantic movement — a major, though peaceful, revolution in the evolution of western ideas and tastes — was responsible for the methods which we still find the most congenial in the evaluation of works of art, in this sphere too the contributions of Italy are obviously impressive. Of one Italian Romantic critic, Francesco De Sanctis, an authoritative living scholar, René Wellek, has admiringly said that he wrote "what seems in many ways the finest history of any literature ever written."<sup>2</sup> This achievement would have probably been of an entirely different nature without the heritage of Giambattista Vico, who also makes more com-



prehensible the tremendous impact of Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), both in and outside Italy. Croce's influence, from the very beginning of this century, has been so wide and deep that it is no surprise to find recognition of it where one would not reasonably expect it.<sup>3</sup> Recently Professor Edward Wasiolek, in his "Croce and Contextualist Criticism" (*Modern Philology*, LVII (1959), 44-52) argued that Croce is the ultimate source and the logical foundation of the American New Critics. "One of the great paradoxes of the New Critical movement has been its theoretical dependence on Croce's theory of art and its ignorance of that theory" (p. 44). His personality has been so powerfully omnipresent in all of Italian culture, and particularly in literary criticism, that one is justifiably tempted to view him as the pivotal point in the development of all critical schools and methods over the last half century in Italy.<sup>4</sup>

The influence of this Neapolitan philosopher leads us to another crucial consideration about the nature of the phenomena under scrutiny: literary criticism has long been characterized in Italy, more than in any other country, by a pervasive concern with theory. Such towering masters in the history of this discipline as Vico, De Sanctis, Croce, and Gentile, were all theorists, "philosophers," before they became practical critics, and an idealistic, Platonic, or Platonic-Hegelian brand of theory is typical of them all. This is both the strength and the weakness of Italian criticism. A systematic theory can be an invaluable and irreplaceable foundation; it can also become prejudice and bias. It can guide understanding and research; it can also fetter it. In any case, the foreign student of such critical literature is likely to be puzzled and antagonized by its terminological and ideological complexities unless he possesses an adequate preparation — which is rarely the case.

Given this background, it would not be justified for us to expect a radical, sudden change in the situation following the end of the Second World War. The roots of Italian critical methodology were too deep to be greatly influenced by even as important a political event as this. Hence we find not one single new element of importance as

an outcome of the war. Even the Marxist school of criticism, which one would expect to appear as a radical novelty, since it obviously could not have developed in Italy before the end of the war, has not produced anything more significant and vital than Antonio Gramsci's works — all written in the Fascist prisons. The newest method to have appeared in European and American criticism, the stylistic method, is represented at its best by scholars who were formed well before the war: De Robertis, Schiaffini, Devoto, Terracini, Fubini, and Contini, all of them more heavily indebted to Croce (himself no "stylistic" critic) than to Leo Spitzer, to mention only the most authoritative master of that method outside Italy.

The greatest innovation in post-war Italy in the field under discussion was the opening of the national barriers, resulting in the free exchange of ideas and data with the rest of the world. Of course, this was a most welcome and beneficial event. Italy had a great deal to learn (and who has not?) from a widening of her cultural horizons. But the result was not the acquisition of new theories, new "methods," but rather the "sprovincializzazione" of Italian culture. Some of the best minds had been impatiently looking forward to this falling of the barriers, and expected a lot, especially from America. The cases of C. Pavese, E. Vittorini, and Giaime Pintor are typical. True enough, by the end of the war these earnest students of American creative and critical literature had already acquired much of their knowledge, but their lessons bore fruit among their readers only after the war. It was a breath of fresh air, and it found an eagerly receptive public. In particular, the younger students began to look to the heterogeneous and lively group of American scholars collectively labeled "the New Critics." Italian students were particularly well prepared to assimilate the work of that "school," inasmuch as its general mental framework seemed to be — and was — similar, if not directly related, to the complex of principles made familiar by Croce.

Cultural expectations from the USA were equally high in the area of creative literature, and there again the names

of Pavese and Vittorini occur to us as those of standard-bearers. But in both areas it soon became evident that less than had been expected could actually be learned from America. This was precisely because, at least in the case of the New Criticism, the methodological and theoretical implications were not thoroughly novel in the country of Croce and of the "hermetic" school — the latter of which had already assimilated so much from the French symbolists and surrealists.

For this and other, more general and profound reasons, a certain dissatisfaction with all theories, methods, and schools resulted — a not entirely detrimental development in a country that had already seen so much of them. The widespread return to an uncomplicated respect for bare "facts," which was a natural consequence of this state of affairs, was hailed by many as a salutary, re-educating experience in the tradition of the soberer, more empirically-minded Anglo-Saxon methods of literary research. Others tended to condemn it — not quite incorrectly, yet ungenerously — as a reactionary resumption of positivism — the nineteenth century "monster" once so pitilessly persecuted by Croce.

In the meantime, several of the respected old masters disappeared from the world of the living: in 1952 alone, Pietro Pancrazi (who had collected his *Scrittori d'oggi* after the war [I-IV, 1946; V, 1950; VI, 1953]), Giorgio Pasquali, Attilio Momigliano, Carlo Calcaterra, and Croce himself died. After surveying this decade and a half, which had opened with hopeful expectations, followed by enriching assimilation and partial disenchantment, one may feel that in a country so concerned with broad guiding ideas, a truly "new" method of criticism can come only in the wake of a new literature, as a necessary tool for its interpretation. But neither in Italy nor elsewhere does one see today the emergence of a vital new creator, and in a stagnating literature a true renovation of criticism is most unlikely.

In order to grasp some common trends among the varied and versatile modes of literary research which were practiced in Italy during the last fifteen years, we might



proceed by dividing the work produced into three categorical types:

I. First, we can identify a type of criticism which I should like to call "ontological," using this term as it is used by an authoritative American critic.<sup>5</sup> This school tends to consider the work of art as an isolated *unicum*, and holds that it must be studied *in* and *per se*. This, they believe, would be the only task of the true critic, who would be without concern for the personality of the author, his cultural derivations, his intentions, and his social or intellectual milieu. In this sense at least, we are very close to the principles of the "Well-Wrought Urn" of American New Criticism. Croce's truest disciples are to be found within this school, which is undoubtedly weaker after the war than it was in the forty-odd preceding years, but still relatively strong in Italy. In practice, however, this "intrinsic" approach to the study of literature is more of an ideal than a reality, and examples of it are more easily found in the theoretical statements and avowed principles of the critics, than in the concrete active exercise of their criticism. As examples of the Crocean influence on well-known critics, see Attilio Momigliano's (an outstanding figure who should really be classed apart and characterized by his "impressionism") *Commenti on the Promessi Sposi* and the *Divina Commedia*; Francesco Flora's *L'orfismo della parola*, 1953; Luigi Russo's *Ritratti e Disegni Storici*, Serie III (Studi sul Due e Trecento), 1951, and *La critica letteraria contemporanea*, 1953-54; and several works of Mario Fubini (for example *Romanticismo italiano*, 1953, *Dal Muratori al Baretti*, 1954, *Critica e Poesia*, 1956), and others who, like those just mentioned, can also be classified in other groups as far as part or all of their work is concerned. This should not be surprising, as all divisions and classifications are bound to be somewhat arbitrary and only relatively valid: they are more ideal than real — besides, one does not usually *belong* to a school of criticism as one would be affiliated with a religious sect or a political party.

Ideally speaking, it is not unfair to consider the "her-

metic" school the extreme, radical wing of Croceanism. Such a view is expressed in a well-informed general study of Italian contemporary criticism.<sup>6</sup> It is fairer, however, to remember that the "hermetic" group (Carlo Bo, Luciano Anceschi, Sergio Solmi, Adriano Seroni, Mario Apollonio, Piero Bigongiari, Oreste Macrì, and Mario Luzi) stood for the very kind of poetry (Mallarmé, Valéry, Rivière, Symbolism, and Surrealism, let alone the Baroque and allegory) that Croce attacked and condemned. This group, strictly speaking, belongs rather to the pre-war period, the Fascist *ventennio* to be exact, and it was then characterized by the dedication to a "pure," "non-engagé" poetry and criticism (they never mentioned the word Fascism and the Fascist terminology, and kept aloof from every historically and socially conditioned problem). After the war, this trend still enjoyed some popularity among the younger generation for several years, but one can say that its creative period was past; it had fulfilled its function, like hermetic poetry.<sup>7</sup> As documents of this school in our period one might mention A. Seroni's *Ragioni critiche*, 1944, and *Nuove ragioni critiche*, 1954; and M. Luzi's *L'inferno e il Limbo*, 1949; two works about the school are F. Giannessi's *Gli Ermetici*, 1951, and E. Bonora's *Gli ipocriti di Malebolge e altri saggi di letteratura italiana e francese*, 1953.

II. The second broad current shares with the third a belief in the expediency of establishing a rapport between the work and the factors responsible for its historically determined nature. These two schools of thought can be distinguished according to the class of factors with which one believes such a rapport must be established in order to make the work of art comprehensible: the first school aims to study the origin and development of the work — still considered as an *unicum* — in the very elements that made it so individual and different: the personality of the author, his psyche, his personal assimilation of the culture of his time, his particular way of working. It includes a wide range of possibilities, from the most refined analysis of linguistic expression, through various degrees of psychological study of the characters and plot and their relation

to their creator, to the most "positivistic" research into biographical material. Thus, for instance, an important and original place should be given here to Walter Binni, who has studied the role of different intellectual conceptions of poetry in the formation of works of art (*La poetica del decadentismo italiano*, 1936; *Metodo e poesia di L. Ariosto*, 1947. See also his *Preromanticismo Italiano*, 1948). Similarly, one could mention in this context several critics of contemporary literature who, in a more or less militant or journalistic vein, tend to analyze a single book or a group of works in the light of what they know of the author's culture, personality, and aims. This is true, for example, of Enrico Falqui's *Prosatori e Narratori del Novecento*, 1950, and Giacinto Spagnoletti's work on contemporary literature (See his important *Antologia della poesia italiana, 1909-1949*, 1950).

But in this category of criticism, which I should like to call "ontogenetic," one could first place all the varieties of stylistic criticism. This much-debated and newest of all methods is often marred by a misunderstanding based on the confusion between stylistic analysis, which can be either a linguistic affair or part of a critical (aesthetic) evaluation, and literary criticism proper, which includes the former and usually implicitly conditions its conclusions. The famous "circle" of stylistic criticism is actually an arbitrary movement *per se*, made legitimate by the implied (inexpressed but essential) non-stylistic judgments that predetermine its results. In Italy there developed rather early a particular form of stylistic study, G. De Robertis's "variantismo" (sometimes ironically termed "critica degli scartafacci"), that is, the study of the genesis of a work of art through an examination of the variant readings whereby the author reached the definitive "perfect" form for his expression. This is not a valid method absolutely speaking (if only because we do not have variants for all works), but whenever applicable, and if properly applied, it can give very subtle insights and enlightening results. Besides the work of De Robertis (especially his *Saggio sul Leopardi*, 1952) this school can be typified by the work of Raffaele



Spongano (*La prosa di Galileo e altri scritti*, 1949, and the edition of Guicciardini's *Ricordi*). Spongano can also be considered a disciple of Michele Barbi and as such, a representative of the "New Philology" — together with such students as Lanfranco Caretti (*Saggio sul Sacchetti*, 1951), Gianfranco Folena (*La crisi linguistica del '400 e l'Arcadia di J. Sannazzaro*, 1952; "L'esperienza linguistica di C. Goldoni," *Lettere It.* X, 1, 1958, 21-54); Emilio Bigi (*Dal Petrarca al Leopardi*, 1954); Piero Bigongiari — formerly a "hermetic" — (*L'elaborazione della lirica leopardiana*, 1948); and Mario Marti (*Cultura e stile nei poeti giocosi del tempo di Dante*, 1953). Antonino Pagliaro should be mentioned for his studies in semantics and Aurelio Roncaglia as a romance philologist. A profession of "variantismo" by Caretti can be found in his *Filologia e critica*, 1955. B. T. Sozzi has also achieved remarkable results along these lines with his *Studi sul Tasso*, 1954. A separate and farther-reaching current of stylistic criticism is represented by scholars such as B. Terracini, M. Fubini, A. Schiaffini, G. Devoto, G. Contini, F. Chiappelli, and C. Segre, whose work is closer to the examples of Leo Spitzer and Dámaso Alonso (cf. Schiaffini's introduction to Spitzer, *Critica stilistica e storia del linguaggio*, 1954 — but one should bear in mind that Spitzer did not accept the derivation Croce-Vossler-Spitzer, here postulated). It is perhaps in this group that one finds the most rigorous and sophisticated realizations of literary scholarship, with a happy balance between thorough factual information and a consciousness of methodological and theoretical issues.<sup>8</sup>

III. The third trend emphasizes the historical, social, and cultural influences reflected in the work of art. Its goal is to trace the origin and development of the work in the context of that milieu which makes it comprehensible and to which it in turn gives intelligible value. Owing to the influence of what the Germans call *Geistesgeschichte* (and the related *Kulturgeschichte*), this trend is particularly strong in Italian criticism, although it is usually found there in a form that differs from the more factual "positivistic" patterns to be encountered elsewhere. I would call

this the "phylogenetic" trend, inasmuch as, even though the professed aim of this type of research may be the fuller understanding of the single work of art as an individual entity, one senses in it a tendency to shift the attention toward the group of which it is a part, through the identification of the general characteristics of a people, an epoch, a movement, a type of material civilization or intellectual culture. Widespread and deeply rooted as it may be in tradition, this method (or rather complex of methods) is the more easily attacked on theoretical grounds, precisely for its "extrinsicality," for its potential drifting away from "literature" towards general "history."

The extreme wing of this school and the one most open to attack is represented by the "Marxist" critics. At times (as in the case of Natalino Sapegno or Concetto Marchesi — or Luigi Russo who, as a critic, is more of a Crocean than a Marxist) it is difficult to see the relationship between the critic at work and his alleged Marxist affiliation; at others the relationship becomes so obvious that the reader is tempted to reject the essay as mere practical propaganda with no scientific value. This group is large, but their valid results have been rather meager. The movement was sparked, in terms of technical procedure, by the authoritative example of Gramsci (the secretary of the Italian Communist Party who died in the Fascist prisons in 1937), and by such a militant critic as Piero Gobetti in its more moderate phases. Mario Alicata, Giansiro Ferrata, Valentino Gerratana, Cesare Luporini, Gastone Manacorda, Carlo Muscetta, Giuseppe Petronio, Ippolito Pizzetti, Dario Puccini, Carlo Salinari, and (after the war) Adriano Seroni are in this group.

But *Geistesgeschichte* in general has produced some of the most valid and permanent literary scholarship: suffice it to mention the vast, unusually expert work of Eugenio Garin, especially in the field of Humanism. The study of broad movements unifying vast series of works can be exemplified by Carlo Calcaterra's "Il Problema del Barocco" and Umberto Bosco's "Preromanticismo e Romanticismo" in *Questioni e correnti di Storia Letteraria*, 1949. Likewise,

the study of a single author can be happily balanced by investigations into the history of ideas and a rare alertness to the peculiarities of literary style and forms, as in Luigi Firpo's work on Campanella. Many of the Catholic critics (as some like to identify them, although their religious affiliation is rather hard to discover in their work), fall somehow into this class: Vittore Branca, for instance, gives us a most competent and original interpretation of Boccaccio (*Boccaccio medievale*, 1956) as a mirror of his historical and cultural conditions, and even as the "epic poet of Italy's medieval businessman." Giuseppe Billanovich is engaged in an earnest and erudite attempt to all but revolutionize the early history of Italian literature; he is technically a philologist, but he really aims at a total reconstruction of the culture of a country at a given epoch in the distant past. Giovanni Getto is fundamentally an eclectic personality who tries to get the best out of all methods and harmonize them in a working syncretistic whole — a delicate, ambitious undertaking, but perhaps the most sensible under the present circumstances.<sup>9</sup>

"Comparative Literature" can also fall within this third major category of literary research, and in this connection it will suffice to recall for general reference the volume *Letterature Compare* (fourth in the series *Problemi ed Orientamenti . . .* ed. by A. Momigliano), 1948, competently compiled by A. Viscardi, C. Pellegrini, A. Croce, M. Praz, V. Santoli, M. Sansone, and T. Sorbelli. First-rate critics like Ferdinando Neri (who died in 1954), L. Foscolo Benedetto, and Mario Praz are best known as comparatists or for their contributions on foreign literatures, but their example is still exerting a lively impact on a broad front.

All in all, the variety of Italian post-war criticism is splendidly illustrated by the number, richness, and commitment of the literary journals, where a large portion of the recent critical activity first appeared before being collected in book form by the authors. Such reviews as *Aut-Aut*, *Belfagor*, *Comunità*, *Convivium*, *La Critica*, *Cultura Neolatina*, *Filologia Romanza*, *Giornale Storico della Lettera-*



tura Italiana, Humanitas, Inventario, Itinerari, Letteratura e Arte, Letterature Moderne, Lettere Italiane, Lingua Nostra, Il Mulino, Paideia, Paragone, Il Politecnico, Il Ponte, Quaderni Ibero-Americani, Rassegna della Letteratura Italiana, Rinascimento, La Rinascita, Rivista di Letterature Moderne e Comparate, Società, Studi Americani, Studi Danteschi, Studi di Filologia Italiana, Studi Francesi, Studi Medievali, Studi Romanzi, and Tempo Presente (not to mention more specialized or shortlived items); some of them old-timers, others typical offspring of the renovated cultural climate of the post-war period, are flanked by weeklies like the *Fiera Letteraria*, and the literary sections of the dailies' "Terze Pagine." This colorful, lively collection of periodicals has not been paralleled at any other time in Italy, and hardly surpassed in other countries. Large or small, bold newcomers do not wait for space to be left by the disappearance of some older review, put out of circulation by financial or other troubles. And at such a time when literary scholarship is so often highly specialized and remote from the interests of the public, one cannot help but envisage this as a comforting spectacle.

#### NOTES

1. Cf. *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, New York, 1899 I, 1908 II, and the important, expanded Italian translation by A. Fusco, *La Critica Letteraria nel Rinascimento*, Bari, 1905.
2. R. Wellek, "F. De Sanctis," *Italian Quarterly* I, 1 (1957), 5-43. The quotation is from p. 35. This essay will be part of the third volume of Wellek's *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*, New Haven, vols. I and II, 1955.
3. For instance, the Preface of Edward Sapir's *Language* (1921), still a major textbook in English-speaking colleges and universities, contains a homage to Croce for his understanding of linguistic questions. For a recent study of the subject, see Santino Cavaciuti, *La Teoria linguistica di B. Croce*, Milano, 1959.
4. So does L. Fabbri de Cressatti in *Las corrientes de Crítica e Historiografía Literarias en la Italia actual*, Montevideo, 1955.
5. Cf. J. C. Ransom, *The World's Body*, New York, 1938: "Poetry: a note in ontology," and *The New Criticism*, New York, 1941: "Wanted: An ontological critic."

6. Cf. Fabbri de Cressatti, *op. cit.* Also cf. a review of this study in *R. Ph.* XI, 2 (1957), 186.
7. Cf. Giorgio Bárberi Squarotti, "Critica ermetica e critica marxista," *Lettere Italiane* VIII, 2 (1956), 153-182.
8. Cf. Helmut Hatzfeld, "Recent Italian Stylistic Theory and Stylistic Criticism," in *Studia . . . in honorem L. Spitzer*, Bern, 1958, a very severe and rather dogmatic survey, to be sure, but interesting and informative.
9. Cf. his "La storia letteraria," in *Tecnica e Teoria letteraria* (ed. by A. Momigliano), 2nd ed. Milan, 1951. The reader will find the names of a number of young, promising critics not mentioned in this survey in Claudio Gorlier, "Contemporary Italian Literary Criticism," *The Literary Review*, Autumn 1959, pp. 163-169.

## Postwar Poetics and Poetry

DANTE DELLA TERZA

As everybody knows, after the end of the last war Italian literature experienced its great period of realism, and the literary genre of the moment was the novel. The twenty years that elapsed between the time of the review *Ronda* and the war had been a period of poetry, of the lyrical fragment, of stifled song conceived in isolation, and of mournful musicality savored in the silence of unpeopled space. The postwar period became the period of the self-explanatory narrative, of new freedom to speak out, of drama as opposed to elegy, of "realism" as opposed to "hermeticism." The war was still alive in memory and at the heart of every literary endeavor. It had burned to the core and, the memory of it still smarting, appeared as the great catharsis from which humanity had sprung up anew, once again fraternal, eager to tell of present experience, anxious to choose at all costs its own interpretation of the past, even at the risk of breaking with it. In the field of poetry, the period of harmony and agreement between the poet and the critic who had discreetly followed him was succeeded by a period of rupture, in which the critic impatiently pointed out the goals to be attained and the mistakes to be avoided; and where there was no critic, the poet took his place, setting himself up as judge both of himself and of his fellow poets. Neorealism, wishing to anticipate the creative act as well as justify it, turned with all its selective force on that mirror of errors, of true and false greatness, that is the past. The most recent past to be affected was that which can be defined as the period of obscure poetry, of hermeticism. The neorealists no longer wished to interpret it by means of stylistic categories within the poetic discourse itself, but to justify it by means of an historical analogy. They wished to practice a "criticism of causes" not a "criti-



cism of things," as had those who, like Gargiulo, De Robertis, Contini and Bo, had accompanied contemporary Italian poetry along the course of its development. Thus, if the poetry of those twenty years was obscure, it was so because that was the only way to say no to a dictatorial society. The anguish of existing in time and space which we find in Montale's poems was the justified rejection of and protest against an historical time and a circumscribed space. The reader who had lived out the war in the provinces, upon reading these lines of Montale — "I have often met the pain of living/ it was the strangled stream that gurgles/ it was the shrivelling of the scorched leaf/it was the fallen horse"— will find himself besieged by the memory of his native city where he had so often seen such horses, starved for food which the war made scarce for man and beast, fall in the streets before their exhausted masters. Clearly, this method of reading the poets of the period, requiring as it does the collaboration of the reader in order to reconstruct an historical atmosphere and alluding to communally experienced circumstances, tends to shift the center of interest in poetry from the independent organic whole of the work of art, as Croce had taught, to the relationship between the work of art and the reader who profits from it. Croce did not abandon the "monogenetic" analysis of the work of art, unless it was to confute an old thesis of the nineteenth-century dilettante philosopher, Ruggero Bonghi, who was concerned with the reasons for the unpopularity of Italian literature in Italy; the rest of the time, the aristocratic character of Croce's esthetics consistently disdained the study of the relationships between poetry and its public. Critical interest in the dualistic approach to poetry (in the sense inaugurated by Sartre in his *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*) could not help but foster the non-lyric, non-elegiac, the narrative-dramatic quality in poetry; not only because of the relationship of creative "dialogue" established between poet and reader, but also for the more particular reason that the reader who emerged from the war showed an avidness for clarity and dramatic continuity, as well as a broader sensitivity to poetry and literature.

The most serious consequence of this expansion of the framework of Italian culture was a certain theoretical confusion which presided at the historical reappraisal of the poetry of the recent past. Realistic taste, working from the fixed certitude of narrative literature which is, be it autobiography or fiction, a well-defined literary genre, superimposed its own vision of life on the poetry of the past, revising that poetry, limiting it, questioning the very future of poetry itself. This polemical stand, rather than pointing the way toward a new age of poetry, limited itself to establishing the obvious fact that neorealism felt prose to be a more vital, more complex form of communication than poetry. Perhaps never before has a tradition essentially elevated and rhetorical (in spite of Boccaccio, Manzoni and Verga), and hence inclined to regard poetry as a higher form of expression than prose, been so handily overthrown.

There are certain observations on poetry made by Cesare Pavese around 1935 that in every way belong to the ancestry of this new sensibility so drawn to the self-explanatory, dramatic narrative. But in Pavese, those observations that link him with this open, dramatic kind of poetry end up, as so often happened because of the experimental nature of his art, by being intermingled with other observations of an opposite kind. And this is perhaps the reason why the youngest generation of poets — those trying out in such avant-garde, *engagé* reviews as *La Strada*, *Officina*, *Situazioni*, and *Montaggio* — do not always recognize Pavese as their precursor. In his remarks on poetry, Pavese at first proceeds directly toward the formulation of a purely mimetic theory of poetic expression — pure and simple description of the “thing,” the object, without any development of metaphorical relationships or any intrusion of logic: but then he goes on to reflect on the logical nature of language which is always in the act of defining, and on the poetic nature of words which contain imprisoned within themselves an image and a myth. Thus he arrives at the contradictory formulation of the “narrative-image” (*immagine-racconto*), by means of which the poet identifies himself with the dramatic substance of his discourse, omitting any

sentimental or descriptive digressions, and the "distraction-image" (*immagine-svago*), by means of which the poet turns his gaze on external things and decorative detail, planting himself at the window, so to speak, and contemplating nature. Caught between these two contradictory drives, the one toward that narrative realism that finally resolves itself into a vocation for fiction, the other toward the construction of poetic myths, Pavese ended up postulating a literary form in which prose and poetry cease to be perceived as opposites; he created a poetry that is all narrative and a prose in which each scene is constructed as an metaphorical interpretation of a state of mind. Pavese progressed from *Lavorare stanca*, poetry in verse with an ample narrative cadence, not devoid of a certain painful emphasis on content, through intermediary experiments to *Dialoghi con Leucò*, a mythic prose or reconstruction of mood through imagery. In its best moments *Dialoghi con Leucò* is true narrative song; in its most obvious moments of pure bravura it is high lyric prose reminiscent of the magician D'Annunzio. Pavese's last book of poetry *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi* appeared posthumously, and it is so painfully bound up with autobiographic experience that it seems to be a clear and open manifestation of that romanticism of life which Pavese as a mature and responsible writer had known how to curb and restrain.

For all his re-evaluation of content, his strong opposition to the elegy, his attempt to dramatize in the ample meters of ordinary speech man's daily struggle to survive and his awareness of his lot, Salvatore Quasimodo possesses a sensibility more clearly directed toward poetry. His assertion that life is a struggle and duty is stressed by his consideration of the dream as a part of life and not an escape from reality. This determination to judge life as a series of incidents through which man reveals himself in his entirety generates a force of style, a-metrical and prose-like, which the poet terms the style of translation. The affirmation that Quasimodo nevertheless possesses a sensibility always turned in the direction of poetry is intended to mean that, for him, this style which reflects the "real" does not constitute a



renunciation of poetry: in spite of the low familiar tone he adopts, he aims at poetic eloquence.

A great deal that has been written lately about Quasimodo the poet is unjust. The Nobel prize did not, in this regard, render him a great service. Critics have tended perhaps too rigidly to characterize his poetry in frozen dilemmas — an hermetic Quasimodo, controversial but authentically poetic; and a realistic Quasimodo, bound by the tenets of propaganda literature. A more skilful and also more exact variation of this theme would seem to be the one expressed by the young critic Sergio Antonielli, according to whom the best Quasimodo came into being around 1942 when the poet was doing his translations of Greek lyrics and developing as a “European” poet, freed of his rather provincial imitation of hermeticism; the process then continued through *Giorno dopo giorno*, published in 1945, which represents the greatest extension of human qualities in Quasimodo’s poetry. This thesis can be judged correct in its insistence on reading the most recent Quasimodo in full awareness of the gradual maturing of his personality as a poet and his hard-won independence, so petulantly characterized in the polemical postwar years. Quasimodo’s latest book, *La terra impareggiabile* (Mondadori, 1958), takes up anew certain themes dear to the best Quasimodo, such as the re-evocation of the Greek strain in his origins. But his desire for open metrical forms and for a clear, not excessively allusive discourse that trustingly reveals itself to the reader, continues as well, nor should it be underestimated. Any definition and summing up of Quasimodo’s poetry should take into account the persistence of his Greco-Sicilian sensibility throughout the whole arc of his experience (though it must be said that its affirmation since the war lacks conciseness in form.) In my view, an imbalance persists between his expenditure of theorizing energies, so typical of postwar poetics, and his continuing inclination toward song, which at times seems strained and forced toward aims which do not belong to him in an effort to achieve results which are beyond him. On the other hand, in order to understand also the prewar Quasimodo, we must take into account what Stendhal re-

ferred to as his *spagnuolismo*, that pride which allows Quasimodo to skip Petrarchism altogether and call directly on the purity of the Greek word to which he feels loyal as a Sicilian subject of Magna Graeca.

However, the South does not always make this pride possible: beside the opulent Greek *Mezzogiorno* exists the peasant *Mezzogiorno*, torn between its prehistoric wisdom and its hunger for land. This was the humble Italy sung by the poet from Lucania, Rocco Scotellaro, during the few brief years of his career. He possessed neither the authority nor the culture of a Quasimodo, nor really knew, as Quasimodo did, how to give his province a voice of persuasive universality. It was precisely as the expression of a local humanity lacking contact with literary Italy that the town of which he was mayor and the peasants around it, with their faces, their gestures, and the forlorn warmth of their voices, formed the object of his poetry. With Scotellaro, the village, in its appearance as a world apart lamenting its age-old immobility, enters Italian poetry. Scotellaro transcends the folklore sketch in the best of his poems because he is capable of perceiving human greatness in his protagonists: in his shoemaker father, a violent, kindly man whose earthly vicissitudes, whose sojourn in America and whose sudden death the poet-son evokes; in his mother, whose possessive, jealous love he occasionally curses, but in whose name, the only true one, he takes leave of poetry and life. Scotellaro died at thirty, too soon for his personality to reach its full development: and, in fact, his poetry gives evidence of a continual oscillation between an epic and an elegiac strain, between the celebration of the epic struggle of his peasants against the oppression of man and nature, and the sad elegy, full of stifled music, with which he anticipates their ruin, their alienation from the land. Still, Scotellaro's poetry, collected in the volume *È fatto giorno* which appeared posthumously in 1954, remains the moving document of an unforgettable personality and the noblest dimension of that poetry of the peasant world which Carlo Levi, friend and master of Scotellaro, foreshadowed in his writings on the South.

Scotellaro's province is his native province; he had it in his blood and lovingly conjured it up in his memory. Pier Paolo Pasolini's poetic province is both a conquest and a choice. The son of a career officer, Pasolini lived in Friuli, Bologna, and Rome, and in Rome he became the writer of the *ragazzi di vita*, the street urchins, and of the life and violent slang of the Roman suburbs. We have indicated as typical of neorealism that ideal priority of prose over poetry, and in that connection we can point to the poetry of Pasolini as the text in which the bases for slang prose are explained and theorized. Pasolini's poetry is, therefore, as I have already had occasion to point out (*Italian Quarterly*, Spring 1957), predominantly explanatory and theoretical. Already in *L'Usignuolo della Chiesa Cattolica*, the book of poems preceding *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, the choice between standard language and dialect is, according to the theoretical justification Pasolini gives it, grafted onto an existential motif of consonance between dialect and adolescence. It is precisely with the aim of eternalizing, by dint of love and abstraction, the adolescence of the soul, that Pasolini subtracts language from time, dialect from language, and slang from dialect. Pasolini, a highly learned poet and writer, calls this operation "heresy" or "schism," and it has a character at once mimetic and idealizing. The photographic reproduction of reality does in fact contain inherent within itself a negative charge that drags language down, degrading it. The reader who has collected in his mind hendecasyllables of the elevated lyric tradition, such as "Io venni in loco d'ogni luce muto," or "cresce l'abete schietto e senza nocchi," or "l'odorata maremma e il ricco mare," or the even more famous "dolce e chiara è la notte e senza vento," finds himself on reading Pasolini assailed by baseness and confounded in his musical and formalistic upbringing by a poetics that permits such hendecasyllables as "le immondizie cominciano a odorare" ("the garbage begins to smell"). And yet this reality of Pasolini's, while violently separated from and purged of any form of contiguous reality, is in a way idealized. Pasolini's poetry theorizes a privative operation, one that subtracts objects, landscapes and people from the complex reality sur-



rounding them. He starts out in *L'Usignuolo della Chiesa Cattolica* courting an Italian landscape as pure dialectal expression, and the privative preposition *senza* ("without") returns again and again obsessively in the poems; and he ends up celebrating an epic of the Roman suburbs, justifying, in *Ceneri di Gramsci*, that slang which the characters in his novels are made to speak as if they were living in a jungle and had no contact with the bourgeois linguistic world of the city. By way of paradox it has been said that if the Italian government were ever to clean up the suburban Roman slums Pasolini would have nothing to write about. This is probably nothing more than a witticism, nor do I wish here to theorize hypothetically about the future of so brilliant a writer. It is perhaps permissible, however, to insert the partialness of Pasolini's poetics into a more complex framework along with other facets of Italian leftist culture since the war. It would be interesting, for instance, to analyze how much the *ragazzi di vita* epic, completely cut off from the rest of the world, has in common with certain historiographical attempts since the war to study the Italian labor movement without connecting it with movements of other social groups and classes and without studying it in its national setting.

To turn back for a moment and gather up loose threads, a perusal of the postwar reviews will bring to light an essay by the Florentine poet Mario Luzi, published in 1946 and entitled "Inferno and Limbo." In this essay, the "hermetic" poet exalts Petrarchism, understood as the spirit of that literature which substitutes itself for the physical history of the world. A young critic analyzing Luzi's collection of poems *Un Brindisi*, also published in 1946, maintained that for Luzi *res sunt consequentia nominum*: it is not the things that count but the words. Almost as if in confirmation of this ultra-literary orientation, Luzi devoted an ever more intense attention to that great laborer of words, Mallarmé. How is one to explain such an orientation in the midst of the postwar period? Actually, though critics may be disposed to arrange literary phenomena in depth, separating them for convenience one from the other until they form self-contained chapters of literary history, in reality these phenomena ar-

range themselves radially, so as to touch and even interpenetrate. If in the thirties Pavese, formulating the need for an open poetic discourse that would be dramatic and involved with the world, attests to the presence of an anti-hermetic chapter in the age of hermeticism, the postwar period, along with its movement of realistic poetics, has witnessed the persistence of a highly synthetic and allusive poetry.

One is right to think that for these poets of the middle generation, formed in the school of Ungaretti, Montale, and Cardarelli, the war, while being for some at least a great source of inspiration, was not enough of a breakwater to divert their poetry in new directions. However, Franco Fortini in a penetrating essay which appeared in the second number of the review *Menabò* (1960) explained that the lingua franca — the pure inter-regional Italian that these poets continued to cultivate even in such desperate times — is not an example of escapism but, at least in the case of the Luzi of *Onor del vero* (see *Italian Quarterly*, Spring 1957), a means of constructing a human city in which ancestral virtues and dignities are the ultimate defense against the destructive forces of evil. A world exposed to the assault of modern mechanical forces is matched by a poetic language purged of any compromise with contaminated reality — pure *stil novo* is here applied to a world of vital memories and beloved phantoms.

The same could be said of Vittorio Sereni, the hermetic poet whom the Florentine review *Frontespizio* first revealed to us in his poem entitled "Inverno a Luino," which a line inadvertently skipped by the typesetter rendered something less than comprehensible. This second-generation hermetic poet, more than any of the other hermetics, bound himself to a single landscape and entrusted his poetry to a tenuous lyrical and autobiographical thread. But *Diario d'Algeria*, the volume of poems published after the war, and one of the finest things written in our time, showed this reserved, aristocratic poet brought face to face with the world and with history. The poet Sereni had become Lieutenant Sereni, a prisoner of war, a European moved to meditate

in prison camp on other Europeans, on the destiny and responsibility of the European world and European culture in the face of history. A profound sense of human sympathy for his fellows in suffering, both friend and enemy, pervades the entire book. Now Sereni is preparing a new book of poems for which the experience of *Diario d'Algeria* will already be a thing of the past. It is with great curiosity that we may await the new direction this excellent Lombard poet will manifest in his poetry.

For Montale and Ungaretti, the two giants of contemporary Italian poetry, the chapter entitled "War" has become a powerfully experienced part of their poetic biography. One would say that it is a more enlivening ferment for Ungaretti's poetry, a more crystallizing one for Montale. This depends most of all on the nature of two very different poetic techniques and inspirations. Montale, in his *Bufera ed altro*, finds his point of departure in the occurrence, the manifest and menacing occasion, much more than in his other collections of poetry, and he moves progressively away from his point of departure until he has left it behind him like a lost or abandoned element, more and more remote from the unfolding discourse. The hurricane (the *bufera* of the title) that rips through the leaves and the sinister crash of the thunder dissolve into the gesture of a woman's hand that waves and is then swallowed up in the dark. When one says that Montale has added nothing new to his great poetry, that does not mean that he is insensitive to new occasions for poetry in his latest collection, but rather that the conversion of these new occasions into poetry is made by means of a technique, now famous, which for Montale no longer presents the slightest mystery. It is precisely because of this perfect cohesion of form and inspiration that the critics will perhaps discover in the *Bufera* the densest of Montale's poems.

For Ungaretti, the dynamics of his poetic language proceeds differently, in a circular fashion: the poet returns to the poetic occasion, recalling it, continually excavating its layers. *Il Dolore*, Ungaretti's most singular book, transforms the occasion into explicit memory, into autobiography.



One knows that Ungaretti has always had the most profound sense of space and time, but while in the past space and time were embodied in an objective world, in this book two events, the death of his son and the war, emerge as agonizing personal facts. Words like space, time, sea, memory, shadow, assume then a new, more deeply and painfully experienced dimension. The sea, in Ungaretti's imagery, is that free greatness of which Baudelaire spoke in "L'homme et la mer" that opposes itself to the fruitless infinity of memories. But in the identification of memory with distance, there is now a reason for cruel torment, to which the sea adds a lacerating cry: "savage land, immense sea/ separate me from you." And recalling his son buried in Brazil, he again evokes the image of interrupted space toward which he stretches his hands in vain; that space, which is also the space that separates life from death, can be bridged only in dreams: "now I can kiss only in dreams/ your trusting hands." This space becomes identified with time in the memory, and it is precisely from this, his old enemy that the poet receives help, able now, thanks to its aid, to transform real time into a fabled time and space from which the aerial image of the dead child is reborn:

You raised your arms like wings  
and gave back birth to the wind  
as you ran.

As for the war, the other element of poetic autobiography expressed in *Dolore*, no poet perhaps has known as Ungaretti how to express mute time, to sing the silence of the city and the futility of the days and hours in German-occupied Rome. Suffice it to quote a line in which the poet has profoundly expressed the transformation of sky into inferno, of beauty into abyss: "I cieli già decaduti a baratri di fiumi" ("the skies already fallen into abysses of rivers").

After *Dolore* Ungaretti transcended the autobiographic and returned to a more externally objectified emotion, but his victory over biography was a violent one. The new Ungaretti neither wished nor knew how to stifle his clamoring voice that had cried out against war, death, and the suffering of man.

# A Selected Bibliography of Recent Criticism in English of Contemporary Italian Literature

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## The Italian Language Today

GIUSEPPE VELLI

A glance at the Italian language of today, however rapid and brief it may be, makes one aware of several general facts the importance of which must immediately be recognized. First of all, the national language is constantly replacing local speech as a social instrument. This is especially true of the spoken language. As far as the written language is concerned — even in its common rather than its literary aspect — this change is not very recent, but has been taking place for several decades and has played an important part in consolidating the political and civic unity of the nation.

From the time of the unification of Italy until the first decades of the twentieth century, the chief vehicle for the spread of the national language was the printed page — books and newspapers. To this was added the influence of school and the effects of military service which brought young men from diverse and distant regions together for long periods of time to share vital experiences on both a national and an individual level (as in World War I).

The radio and sound movies instantly made important changes in this state of affairs. Slowly, but ever more extensively, the spoken national language succeeded in penetrating the most remote villages, and in entering almost every home. The catastrophic events of the recent war also shook the life of the nation to its foundations. It was no longer possible to differentiate between the active military front and the home front. Entire families were forced to move from the North to the South and vice versa; and these internal migrations did not end with the war. Southern workers still came in great numbers to the large cities of the North.

Two cities, Milan and Rome, are today centers of direct linguistic diffusion. Milan is important because it is a highly industrialized city, which has great economic possibilities and broad circulation of ideas. Rome has a prominent position due to its status as the capital and the administrative center of the national government, its geographical position (Rome is an effective crossroads between North and South), and finally the presence of the movie industry, which is one of the most important sources of linguistic innovations (especially the incorporation into the common language of phrases, constructions, and expressions of the Roman dialect and even of slang). At present, television is having results the importance of which is still difficult to calculate.

It is evident that dialect is losing ground everywhere today and that dialectical monolingualism is now an extremely rare phenomenon. It is also certain that there exist an infinite number of intermediate stages between dialect and the spoken language, depending on the region and/or the social stratum. The formation of various regional *koinés*, whose center of diffusion will be the principal town of the province, also appears certain. In this respect our knowledge of the situation is still vague: above all we lack extensive and exact documentation. Gianfranco Folena has stressed the absence of the traditional instruments of research (the dialectal Atlases), while he has justly hailed the appearance of one of the first studies directed towards bringing light to this characteristic aspect of present-day Italian.

At this point certain questions spontaneously arise, questions which to some degree involve the essence of the Italian language, its history and its development. These questions must be answered in order to give us a correct perspective on the problems of the contemporary language. First, what relations exist today between written Italian and spoken Italian?

In reference to this point an important preliminary distinction must be made, depending on whether we refer to Tuscany and the neighboring regions, or to the rest of Italy.<sup>1</sup> In the former case, the differences between the spoken



language (particularly of the cultured classes) and the written language are not many; in the latter case the situation is different. Outside of Tuscany, be it to the North or to the South, the dialects have an ancient tradition and, as has been mentioned, it is only recently that the national language has been substituted in varying degrees for the dialect, even for the most minute matters of daily life. It must not be forgotten that Italian was diffused initially as a literary language (owing especially to the prestige of three great Tuscan writers, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio), only and later as a common spoken language, (used even for civic needs) particularly after the political unification of the country. The Tuscans have a live linguistic tradition, while other Italians learn the language (both written and spoken) in school. From this results the more sustained, more bookish, and less varied tone of the language as spoken by non-Tuscans. Tuscans, on the other hand, having a tendency to transfer their speech into writing, often run the risk of using clearly regional forms (e.g. *doventare* for *diventare*, *andiede* for *andò*, etc.), thus sinning against the common written language.

It can truly be said today that written Italian has a remarkably stable and regulated physiognomy. Is it really one and the same, however? In other words, is the language of the newspapers the same that one would find in a literary work? Here it is easy to answer "No." Alessandro Manzoni attempted to make the literary language coincide with the spoken one. He did not succeed, it is true, but he did more than a little to bring them together. If today there exist between the two only differences of tonality, or better of expressive latitude, and if the possibilities of osmosis are great, this is due also to the classicism of the Italian language as a whole. It is this same classicism which makes itself felt whenever the plane of discourse is raised, which makes one say *militi ignoti* instead of *soldato sconosciuto*.<sup>2</sup> It can be said moreover that the love for beautiful classical forms even survived the great innovations of movements such as romanticism and realism.<sup>3</sup> Precisely in this

sense, let us not forget the influence of a Carducci or a D'Annunzio.

Even today in a special language such as that of sport, which has a strong tendency, however, to pass the limits of the technical language and to invade ever vaster zones of the common language — we can note this tendency towards a veneration of classical terms. M. Medici has shown recently how in sports publications the use of ethnic names of a decidedly literary stamp to designate the soccer teams is increasing. In truth, such a phenomenon is not astonishing. Certainly Italian is the language which is most similar to its direct progenitor, Latin. And Latin, with Greek, was the natural source of very numerous borrowings over the course of the centuries, borrowings perfectly oriented in Italian, since few changes need be made in a Latin word for it to take on an Italian aspect. But there is more to be said. Thanks to its literary and cultural origin, Italian has been able to retain its physiognomy almost intact over a tradition of many centuries. The present-day language, it has been said,<sup>4</sup> is not very different from that of Dante or Boccaccio, while in order to read French medieval texts, for example (to avail ourselves of a means of comparison which may clarify this phenomenon), a special grammar must be studied and it is necessary to have a dictionary at hand.

However it must not be thought that Italian is a static tongue, one not able to keep up with the times. Since the eighteenth century it has shown itself sensitive to the influx and borrowing of words from abroad. English and French examples have determined to a noteworthy degree the loosening of the rigid forms of classical phrasing. Many scientific terms, terms of sport, of social life, and of politics, have entered Italian from other European languages, particularly French and English. Indeed this process of transfer into the Italian lexicon of the intellectual wealth from other countries has today attained proportions never reached before.

Today it is the newspaper which is the natural vehicle of such innovations. Truthfully, it cannot be said that the

results are always good. Often the haste in which the work of journalists takes place, and a certain mental indolence which makes them passively accept forms and constructions from whatever original which is being translated, tend to detract from the results. Let us compare the term *pressurizzato* recently acknowledged by *Lingua Nostra*<sup>5</sup> (from "pressurized") with the superfluous periphrasis in a sentence of the following kind: "Nella giornata di oggi è emersa *quella che costituisce* la difficoltà fondamentale dell'intera missione" which closely copies the English "what is."<sup>6</sup> See also *automazione*.<sup>7</sup>

Various special languages which at the present time tend to pass on to the common language some of their forms are noteworthy factors in linguistic innovation. Popular sports such as soccer and bicycle racing have assumed such prestige as to cause certain peculiar expressions to be accepted outside of their limited technical realm. (*Arrivare a ruota*<sup>8</sup> is today synonymous with *arrivare secondo* or *immediatamente dopo*.) The language of bureaucracy is particularly fruitful, even if fundamentally barren and mechanical in its sources. To it belong forms such as *premurare*, *relazionare*, *circonstanziare*, etc. More than a few words have left the office and entered the common language. *Nominativo* is often used today instead of *nome*. A very important source of new words is advertising. Linguistic forms such as *Brindate Gancia*, *Sorridete Durban's* tend to become diffused. Advertising and politics have collaborated in spreading phrases such as *Votate socialista*;<sup>9</sup> this form, of French origin, is accepted because it is comparable to a construction not unknown in Italian (*dormir sodo*, *tagliar corto* etc.). Let us not forget the curious expression *Vespizzatevi* (buy a Vespa, travel by Vespa), formed after the model *Motorizzatevi*, which touches a characteristic phenomenon of Italian post-war life, the widespread use of scooters. We should perhaps not neglect to mention a sally of the famous comedian Totò, patterned after the preceding model: "Contro il logorio della donna moderna [this too is a commercial slogan], *soffittizzatevi*" (riparate in soffitta). This last statement has not become diffused (many other witti-

cisms of the popular Totò are, however, of common use: e.g. "*Siamo uomini o caporali?*") but the phenomenon can be instructive because it shows how broad and unpredictable linguistic repercussions may be.<sup>10</sup> Commercial language is prone to exaggeration in all countries. It is not astonishing then, that in Italy it uses to a large extent an already existent form, the superlative of nouns.<sup>11</sup> *Occasionissima, poltronissima* are common. In every provincial town where there is a minimum of social life one speaks of *veglionissimi*. Sports and variety shows are not opposed to glorifying their heroes by using the superlative of their first name: for Fausto Coppi we have had the form *Faustissimo*, for Wanda Osiris la *Wandissima*. On the radio one speaks of *canzonissima*, on television of *Musichierissimo*.

Certain modern scientific terms have also entered the common language (as had already occurred in the case of words such as *vitamine*), and even the dialects. In some towns of southern Italy the popular imagination has attached the epithet *il medico della penicillina* to the local doctor who orders the miraculous antibiotic indiscriminately for pneumonia or for toothaches. The adjective *atomico*<sup>12</sup> is applied even to words as *bellezza* or *cifre*: *una bellezza atomica, delle cifre atomiche*.

The functional role to which all modern languages aspire somewhat has created in Italian a vast network of derivatives with clear inflationary tendencies. It is sufficient to consider the extremely great number of verbs ending in *-izzare* and *-ionare*; the flourishing of learned suffixes *-ismo, -ista, -istico*. The same motive explains the unwholesome expansion in the use of abbreviations<sup>13</sup> for which strong reinforcement has come from abroad. Abbreviations can even be considered as regular words and as such give rise to derivatives. From a form such as IRI (Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale) comes the verb *irizzare*<sup>14</sup>; from FUCI (Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana) comes *fucino*. Not infrequent is the passage from the proper name to the common name: e.g. *una sita* (un torpedone del servizio SITA). In some cases recourse was had to the solution of forming compound words (not usual in Italian). Certain



prefixes could be placed before numerous words so as to catalogue them in family groups: e.g. *autobotte*, *autocarro*, *autofurgone*, *autorimessa*, *autotreno*, etc., *motocarretta*, *montopompa*, *motomietitrice*, *motobarca*, *motopeschereccio*<sup>15</sup> etc. To this series must be added the modern prefixes *toto*- and *tele*-<sup>16</sup> (*totocalcio*, *teleguidare*, *telespettacolo*, etc.).

We have already mentioned the importance of sound movies for the diffusion of the language. Let us conclude these brief remarks on present-day Italian by stressing its efficacy in a more specific direction. By means of sound movies neologisms of every kind, constructions and terms clearly originating in jargon or dialect, are introduced into the common language. The Italian word *picchiatello* entered the language before the war through dubbed films as a good corresponding term to the American "pixilated."<sup>17</sup> Numerous words of Roman origin which today are commonly accepted in the language have been diffused by the movies. Let us keep in mind (as has been mentioned previously) the fact that Rome is the principal center of the Italian movie industry, and that many postwar films (among them certain "classics" of Neorealism, such as Rossellini's *Open City* and De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief*) have their setting in Rome.

Dialect, however, exerts a pressure on the language through other channels. When a strictly regional phenomenon tends to reproduce itself elsewhere, it generally carries with it the term which designates it (let us consider *intrallazzo*,<sup>18</sup> from the Sicilian). If a regional dish achieves national notoriety (and the same may be said for all local products), the dialectical term is accepted in the language (passing usually through a process of adaptation to the Italian phonological system). This occurred for *pizza*, *grissini*,<sup>19</sup> *vongole*, *scampi*, etc. The Neopolitan *vongole* has completely supplanted or tends to supplant the various regional terms designating the savory mollusc (*arselle* in Livorno, *concole* in the region of Ancona, *pôvrazze* in Pesaro, etc.) The same is true of the Venetian *scampi*. Today, even in Paris, the word, pluralized twice (*scampis*), is in competition with the local term. We have here some evidence characteristic

of the pressure which is manifesting itself in Italian towards an even greater linguistic simplification and standardization.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Cfr. B. Migliorini, *La lingua italiana d'oggi*, Edizioni Radio Italiana (Classe Unica 62), Torino, 1957, chap. V, pp. 21-24.
2. Migliorini, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.
3. Cfr. S. Heinimann, *Lingua Nostra*, IX, 1948, p. 51.
4. Migliorini, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
5. XIV, 1953, p. 117.
6. *Lingua Nostra*, VIII, 1947, p. 62.
7. See B. Migliorini, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
8. *La Lingua Italiana d'oggi*, p. 13.
9. See B. Migliorini, "Il tipo sintattico 'Votate socialista;'" *Lingua Nostra*, XIII, 1952, pp. 113-118 (l'articolo e del 1948).
10. Cfr. A. Menarini, "Totò e la lingua," *Lingua Nostra*, XIV, 1953, pp. 117-118.
11. Cfr. M. Medici, "Superlativi di sostantivi," *Lingua Nostra*, XX, 1959, p. 120 ff.
12. B. Migliorini, *La lingua italiana d'oggi*, chap. IX.
13. See B. Migliorini, "Uso ed abuso delle sigle," in *Conversazioni sulla lingua italiana*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1949, pp. 86-90.
14. *La lingua italiana d'oggi*, p. 44.
15. Cfr. B. Migliorini, *Saggi sulla lingua italiana del Novecento*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1942, pp. 7-54.
16. B. Migliorini, *La lingua italiana d'oggi*, p. 44.
17. Migliorini, *ibid.*, p. 19.
18. Cfr. A. Menarini, *Profili di vita italiana nelle parole nuove*, Firenze, 1951, pp. 95-96.
19. *La lingua italiana d'oggi*, p. 49.
20. See R. Sereno, *Italica*, 1957, pp. 108-109.

## Italian Cinema: 1945 to 1960

VITO PANDOLFI

[A well-known master of many theatrical crafts, Vito Pandolfi not only directs plays and collaborates on movies but also writes dramatic criticism and history. Among his recent works the following seem most significant: *Antologia del grande attore* (1954), a collection of memoirs and essays by great Italian actors from Goldoni to the present; *Il teatro italiano del dopoguerra* (1956), a series of critical essays; and *La Commedia dell'Arte: storia e testo* (since 1957), a comprehensive and documentary history in, as of now, seven volumes.]

### *The Unexpected Goal: Neorealism*

One of the most striking events in the history of movie production has been the development of the Italian film since World War II. Of course, it is not difficult to discover numerous precedents for this development; nevertheless, there is something surprising in it. Most other great periods in the history of motion pictures have corresponded either to great periods of historical development, as in the United States or the U.S.S.R., or to crises of conscience in such culturally powerful countries as France or Germany. In postwar Italy, however, intellectual life had been restricted almost to the point of extinction; Italy had come to have a position of small importance in the world, far from the centers of cultural and political power.

The sudden and unexpected flowering of the Italian film after World War II can best be compared to that of the Scandinavian film after World War I. Both phenomena were in a certain sense insular, and also short-lasting. They were due to a combination of special conditions; to the explosion of a special state of mind aided by chance or by environmental factors.

The influence of such developments on the history of

the film and on the minds of the audience can go very deep, but lacks continuity. These movements produce but one type of film, which is always in a sense an exotic type: the Scandinavian film, the Italian film, the "western."

From the point of view of the ideological development of our country and of contemporary civilization, the postwar Italian film is a successful and popular version of the realistic literature of the turn of the century, bordering on dialect or completely pervaded by dialect. It fluctuates between DeAmicis and Verga, between Scarpetta and Di Giacomo, between Bertolazzi and Gallina. In general, however, it says nothing new about the Italy of that time. It has not yet touched upon what was then, in our opinion, the frontier: a dramatic presentation of class differences such as is found in Giovanni Verga's *Dal tuo al mio* (*From Yours to Mine*.) Perhaps this similarity is due to the fact that the purpose of the film-makers is not unlike that of the realistic writers — for the events of the past fifty years have not brought about substantial changes in class relations. Perhaps it is due to the fact that after so many years of D'Annunzio's influence there was a wish to return to genuine sources, sources which still had much to contribute to the mental and moral attitudes common in Italy. But it is certain that this material has not yet been presented with the bitterness which is found in the introverted petit-bourgeois characters of Pirandello.

The story of *Umberto D.* can be said to be more naturalistic than psychological. We are in the presence of types which have not yet become characters; that is why professional actors do not seem necessary. On the contrary, they are a disadvantage. We prefer amateur actors, provided that they really have the psychological characteristics of the types they are portraying (we feel the incongruity of Professor Battisti's appearing as a poor pensioner, and the development of the film suffers). An authentic face is not enough: an authentic psychology is also needed. We have, therefore, a literature which is not well known, newly interpreted, actuated and strengthened by film. On the other hand, the film assumes a definitive function, influenced



by the particular historical situation of Italy. For years this was a land of battle between two armies, a meeting place of the most diverse mentalities and ideologies, and in the face of this there were those who thought to make simple observation the objective of their films, to let events and history speak for themselves. The film did not assert its own individual personality, and for that very reason was exposed to misunderstandings and partiality: Rossellini in *Roma città aperta*, (*Open City*) and *Paisà*, De Sica at times in *Sciuscià* (*Shoeshine*) and *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*.) A true meeting of the two motives, the old and the new, has often occurred, as it does in *Sotto il sole di Roma* (*Under the Sun of Rome*) and *Due soldi di speranza* (*Two Cents Worth of Hope*) by Castellani.

Although the fame of Roberto Rossellini is widespread, his works have not become proportionately popular, especially in his own country, where it is logical that they should be most approved. His work alternates, even within a single film, between cultural imbalance which has its origin in his superficial ideology, and extensive and unexpected inspirations, by means of which he succeeds in "capturing" reality. These inspirations are often profound; he interprets reality in a direct, authentic, astonishing way which has no counterpart in postwar movie production. His gift of intuition permits him to find, between the coldness of documentary films and the melodrama of romantic films, the road to authentic reality, its passions and urgent developments.

The public undoubtedly is deeply moved by such work, but it prefers the "soap operas" that are usually presented, and the human appeal of stars. We are not the only ones to regard Rossellini's *Paisà* as a milestone in the representation of Italian postwar life; this film achieves great tension in its picture of the struggles and hopes of this period, but it is not very good box office material. Its teachings — as well as those of *Ladri di biciclette* and *La terra trema* (*The Earth Trembles*) which are more closely related to it than others of Rossellini's films — will take effect only after a lapse of time. Because of their free scope and frankness

they are, in a certain sense, revolutionary. They force the viewer to face concrete facts.

In the first period of Rossellini's activity, which lasted until the fall of Fascism, he departs from early documentary experiences, and at the side of Francesco De Robertis illustrates events and characters on the fringes of the Fascist wars. He concentrates especially on the lives of doctors (*La nave bianca* — *The White Ship*, and *La croce di fuoco* — *The Cross of Fire*.) His direction at that time was distinguished by ingenuousness and human simplicity of narration. His attitude was conservative and betrayed no particular conviction. He was planning a film about railway men (*Scalo merci* — *Freight-yard*) in collaboration with De Santis, when the disastrous course of the war compelled him, and the whole Italian movie industry, to suspend all activity.

The victory of the Allied forces and the subsequent revival of American films discouraged producers and directors, who considered it improbable that the Italian film would be given fair opportunities to exist. Almost all studios and technical establishments had been ruined or were inadequate. Nevertheless, six months after the liberation of Rome, with Sergio Amidei and Federico Fellini as script-writer and set-designer (an incomparable partnership), he started work on *Roma città aperta*. He began shooting scenes in a cellar on the Via degli Avignonesi, where Bragaglia's avant-garde group had been for a time, and most people considered him a madman. To complete his plan he was forced to sell his household furnishings. Rossellini was and is a militant Catholic, even in his political opinions, but this did not prevent him from describing the resistance in Rome just as it had taken place. He sold the film to "Minerva" for eleven million lire, and it yielded several hundred million on its triumphant world tour. Its actors — Aldo Fabrizi, Anna Magnani, Maria Michi, and Marcello Pagliero — became famous.

*Paisà*, in six episodes, followed the gradual advancement of the Allied troops along the Italian peninsula, showing the reactions of the populace to this movement and to

the German allies of the Fascist party. This movie, originated by Rossellini in collaboration with the German writer Klaus Mann and staged by Fellini and Amidei, depicted a crucial historical period and a critical state of mind. With a variety of images, and scenes that brought a lump to the throat, it demonstrated the tragedy of a nation.

The work proceeded almost without method, blindly, trusting mainly to the inspiration of its creator. Rossellini followed the dictates of reality and art in a most sensitive and sincere way; reality spoke through him, rather than Rossellini speaking through reality as he later tried to do and as is usually done. Improvisation, tracing a course dictated more by circumstances than by staging — a typically Italian method in the traditions of the “*commedia dell’arte*” — greatly enhanced the strength of stark historical facts as seen through the movie camera; and Rossellini knows very well how and where to use his camera to record real events with great profundity.

Rossellini’s success was due to the strength of his feelings and his great need to testify. However, the force of his films was attributed to his intellectual talents, perception, and ideological interpretation of historical reality. He himself became convinced that these were the correct explanations, and from then on his films began to reflect mainly his own personality and his cultural world (which were lacking in originality and superficial in development). This was greatly detrimental to the authenticity of his work.

Rossellini aspires, and with generous impulse, to insert into his stories his own capacity for seeing, his “cinematographic eye.” But his work is no longer as clear as it was when he was able to reproduce a real tragedy and interpret it with his soul turned toward hope. It is now a time of decadence, of wounds which are hidden but no less painful than those produced by the dramatic events of the recent past. It is a time of spiritual dessication.

Vittorio De Sica is first and foremost an interpreter. The psychological theory of acting (that is, individualizing and personifying oneself in others, creating a new perception of them) finds De Sica among the most notable and

excellent examples of its proponents. At present this acting process is being shifted from the theatre and the actor to the screen and the director, of whom, in the most successful cases, the movie actor becomes the "mouthpiece." In De Sica one sees clearly this shift from the actor's psychology to the use of such psychological techniques in each phase of an artistic work. Such continuity insures moving results, and by its means the motion picture spectacle assumes the heritage of the popular theatre. The movie director can find his antecedents in the great actor or great virtuoso of the circus and variety show. So it is with Chaplin, and so it is with De Sica, who after all was born in the town which produced "Pulcinella," then Petito and Scarpetta, and Maldacea and Viviani. The work of De Sica is in the tradition of the Italian "brillante," embodying the gifts of charm, flexibility, and human understanding.

It is evident that some other Italian directors select a narrative theme with the intention of expressing their own personalities through it. It is also evident that when they yield to this misunderstanding, and give vent to their own whims instead of reflecting an historical situation, the results are very poor and very cold. De Sica, on the other hand, always requires some external material to penetrate, understand, and master, just as an actor needs a script or at least a scenario. For De Sica, to give a performance is to be an interpreter, to give form to a concept, to explain its nature. Actors often owe their artistic personalities to the vision of a writer; De Sica owes his to Zavattini. His strength, as well as his limitation, lies in his setting himself a continuous point of reference. He is not an actor-author as was Molière or Chaplin.

Until the movie *I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children are Watching Us*) De Sica does not break away from the sentimental climate, human and smiling, in which Camerini had placed him upon his first appearance on the screen. As an actor as well as a director he has natural gifts of expression, particularly sensitive areas of intuition, and a sure, skillful technique for communicating pathos and humor through the medium of film. He does not, however, seem



able to go beyond the limits of lightness and comedy, and his attempts to do so are uncertain in theme, weak in construction and full of superficial effects. In *I bambini ci guardano* the moral problem of responsibility toward children is met with courage, sincerely felt and expounded; it presents a clear image of men and their duty, but it would be unreasonable to claim that it comes to significant conclusions. One may point out the strength of his intentions, and his success in showing the strong moral principles and sense of family found in the class he depicts, but these are not enough. The cinematographic means are used with skill and confidence, but they are still not sufficiently eloquent. The text of the film, although intrusted in part to Zavattini, is not completely adapted to De Sica; the problem does not have a full, authentic, realistic individuation.

It is probably Zavattini's humor and hidden tragedy which lead De Sica to intrust him with the crucial instrument of his films. In Zavattini's work, unexpected as it may seem, the Italy of today is depicted with immediate and vital authenticity, and freshness of dialect. Zavattini's transition from narrative to screen parallels the transition, thirty years before, of Pirandello from narrative to theatre, although Zavattini's drama has a narrower range of emotions and of possibilities. It corresponds to a difficult postwar situation in which the country is struggling to find a role, a destiny. This postwar era has shown, through the work of De Sica and Zavattini, the anguish of the Italian who cannot stifle his pain, who does not succeed in finding outlets for his moral and material misery, who tries in vain not to give in to resignation and cowardice, who tries to formulate a set of moral standards which will allow him to live with himself. The interpretation on the screen of this Italian has a stronger ardor, reflects more completely the reality of experiences which Zavattini had softened in his short stories by means of a gentle and smiling pathos. The postwar Italian not only remains undecided about his direction; he is afraid even to create objectives, in case he may attain them. The petit bourgeois does not yet know how to escape from the moral prison in which he has shut himself; he does not

dare abandon it in search of adventurous and exciting hopes. If his prison door opens, it is shut again by the time he makes up his mind to escape. The proletarian does not even have the strength to escape, but has succeeded in paralyzing himself, at least provisionally.

The expression of all this is the three films *Sciuscìa*, *Ladri di Biciclette*, and *Miracolo a Milano*, (*Miracle in Milan*), in which Zavattini and De Sica attain complete maturity of expression and almost always keep a good balance between intention, actual subject, and spectacle. They do not reach the lyric heights of *La terra trema* or the extreme clarity of truth of *Paisà*, but they are effective and coherent. The total effect is at times diminished by the pathos of little smiles and little tears (the Pascolinian "fanciullino"), but it is easy to strip away this pathos and to find an adherence to reality unequalled in other Italian artistic efforts. They give us situations which make us think, and in these situations are reflected the bitterness and desolation of a people humiliated by misfortunes and by history, but who seek a simple *raison d'être*, a peaceful and authentic goal for its everyday affections.

In *Umberto D.* we have the man who realizes that there is no way out, that his life will be wasted and he will be isolated behind the barriers of increasingly greater distress. He does not know toward what goal he can aim, and the shining of the sun, the gay bounding of a stray dog must be enough to console him for the affliction of his useless life. Beyond this picture of dull rebellion the success of *Umberto D.* is uncertain. For the first time, the work of De Sica does not quite achieve its aim. Both the stage manager and director are unable to discover the source of Umberto's misfortune, and cannot describe the utter desolation of the vast numbers of people victimized by social conditions. The pensioner Umberto D. is the symbol of an old, tired nation like our own, for whom the possession of a worthwhile life is forbidden. In the face of such tragedy, art has a troubled, timid look; it is too badly wounded to have a receptive sensitivity. The work remains only half complete.

*La terra trema* is a great but limited attempt toward

a particular cinematographic concept. It has splendor and profundity of expression. For figurative majesty and epical expansiveness, it probably ranks, with *Ladri di biciclette* and *Paisà*, as the major experiment of the Italian cinema. Visconti's method was simple and direct. He listened to the men of Sicily and informed himself about their situation — which, however, he wanted to place in a preconceived framework. With a meager troupe of technicians, and guided by his great love for Verga, he set out to interpret the life and the drama of the region. He chose actors who had lived the life he was describing. The staging owes much to the everyday chronicles of Acitrezza and to Verga, whose influence makes itself felt more and more as the work progresses. The speech, naturally, is the Sicilian of the fishermen and was almost improvised on the spot. Scenographic elements hardly exist except for those which were created with surprising imaginative vigor by the motion picture camera of Aldo. Objects and events are scrutinized and illuminated to reveal their inward passion. The visual material has an exuberance and sensitivity that have rarely been encountered. As in Dreyer, the image is fresco-like, the impression is one of solemn vastness which imparts a sense of eternity to walls, stones, bodies, impulses. Voices are sounded with fresh richness, and sometimes harmonize chorally. They have expressive power in laughter, in discussion, and in talk of vengeance, although the values are only phonic for those not familiar with the Sicilian dialect.

What does Visconti himself feel is the meaning of the film? In making it he has used deductive rather than inductive reasoning. He lets the facts speak without giving in to the temptation of taking it upon himself to define them. In this lay the exemplary quality of Verga's work whose narrative even went contrary to his convictions at times, because he was sincere. Visconti observed the region and the appearance and sufferings of the people. For what the film lacks in originality, in subject and staging, Visconti substitutes the intrigue of Verga's plot, the direct human struggles of class against class. These are noble and generous intentions

but they end by substituting themselves for real life, in which polemic is only implicit.

In narration nothing can be taken for granted. Certainly real life should clearly reflect the evidence of history, but this should happen in the epilogue, not the prologue. To do otherwise is to introduce a great weakness into a film; the work is diffuse, its action foreseen and almost superfluous, suffocated by a predetermined psychological framework. The movie no longer presents facts, but moments, although many of these may be said to contain a clear and profound introspective thought.

The story follows a long conflict between the fishermen and the wholesalers who exploit them. 'Ntoni tries to solve this problem by selling his catch directly to consumers and stores. At first he appears to succeed, but when his fishing boat is wrecked in a storm he is thrown into poverty. His whole family collapses. One sister becomes a prostitute, another renounces her lover because she feels herself forsaken, his own fiancée breaks with him because he is now poor, his brother leaves and is lost, his grandfather dies, crushed by the events. 'Ntoni himself loses all faith, begins to drink, quits working and finally has to ask for a job from those very wholesalers whom he had cursed. In the end he believes that a new and different day will dawn, bringing freedom for a man to choose his own occupation and serenity for all.

The development of all this follows an unequal course and the plot connections are often arbitrary and obscure, but one does not pay much attention to them, captured as he is by the harmonious line of the sequences. At first we desire a definite dramatic sense, more coherence, but then we surrender ourselves to the controlled and sustained vehemence of expression.

We may therefore place the work of Visconti among the most dramatic expressions of the conscience of our country in recent years. It can be felt without necessarily being compromised by the motion picture medium; it is the state of mind in which our people live. We must remember, however, that it does not contain a forecast of the future. It does



not urge new perspectives or changes. It lives only in the mind and is not really suited to a "film story."

Certain events, however, have been very forceful on the screen, and have been able to achieve a vital expression in this medium. To understand this clear delineation of motives, this strength, it is necessary to go back to the atmosphere of 1944 and 1945 when the movement began. Italian youth of that time, although it had no political life in the usual sense, took part in events from the sidelines. It was filled with enthusiastic desire for renewal, for purification. Its hopes were at full sail, and in sheep-folds, in cellars, and in prisons this youth prepared for a new world where oppression would cease, where they would live in the new brotherhood and love that seemed to be being born beyond all social barriers in the cold, serene sky about the Alps. In their hearts was the desire to accomplish a real moral revolution, a revolution of customs and obligations. Gramsci and Gobetti would have been able to comprehend this national impetus, but they had fallen. Others were overcome by the action of international forces and they led the country into a state of depression and moral poverty which seemed irreparable. They robbed it of dignity and faith, pushing those who could not adapt to the brink of desperation.

The tragedy of a negative historical and economic situation which nevertheless has within itself the elements for a possible salvation; the oppression of the old structure which does not yield to shock and reform — these are the truths of the early Rossellini, of De Sica and Zavattini, of Visconti and Castellani. These truths breathe but do not achieve vitality, they are resigned and do not have inward freedom. They are crushed by a reality which oppresses and conquers. Such a reality, although it may escape us, passing for the merely pathetic, is revealed in a shout, in the violence contained in certain images; the early rising of the servant-maid in *Umberto D.*, the ending of *Paisà*, the tempest in *La terra trema*. This trend, while it risks losing faith in a real progress, the sense of a civil religion, the light of ethical conduct, is nevertheless one which may be able to rescue

us from misery. It is material and is becoming moral.  
*Two Conclusive Films*

Michelangelo Antonioni's last film, *Il Grido* (*The Shout*), after almost fifteen years, returns to the countryside, the atmosphere and some of the states of mind of Visconti's first film, *Osessione* (*Obsession*). This is not because of formal derivation, which would not be really unusual in cinematographic art, but because of the strong psychological bonds between the two situations.

*Osessione* was the violent drama of the end of an individual's life. This life had been exasperated by bitterness and difficulties. His existence was stifled by external forces until he reacted in a harsh and somber struggle to snatch from living some concealed good. The characters in the film have no other course except impassioned abandonment. *Il Grido*, which also takes place in the plain between Ferrara and Rovigo, and along the shores and mouth of the Po, records the gradual dissolution of violence into desperation and finally suicide. In *Osessione* the drama opens into tragedy; in *Il Grido* it leads only to a dark elegy.

The protagonist of Antonioni's film is a young workman. He has met a married woman who has had no news of her husband for seven years; they live together and he comes to regard her as his reason for being. Then the woman leaves him for a new lover, to whom she binds herself forever. The young man catches sight of her in a crowd, runs after her and slaps her face, and then flees desperately with their baby. He tries all kinds of work, and takes refuge in the arms of all sorts of women, until he comes to realize that he cannot properly raise his little girl in this tormenting, restless vagabondage. He sends her back to her mother and continues to go from village to village, job to job, from woman to woman. His hope is one day renewed when he returns to the small town which he had left and hopes to be welcomed again. Through a window he catches sight of the woman, changing the diaper of a baby born of the new love affair. He escapes into a deserted factory and climbs onto a tall silo. The woman, who has seen him, runs after him and shouts. He reels and falls headlong at her feet.

His life could have been nourished only by her love, and that love had been denied him forever. In this atmosphere of renewed love, in the rhythm of the events and in their interpretation, quite beyond the sentimental story, there appears a statement about life itself, expressed in the life of this individual. The impossibility of satisfying man's most universal need, the difficulty of self-realization, the thwarting of ambitions by the hostility of the world, the need to escape — these are the motives which recur in the work of Antonioni, and he introduces them into *Il Grido* with pungent reality. It is not only because of his talent as a director that he can do this, but because it is his generation and his world which is being expressed. As in *Ossessione*, all hopes, attempts, experiences are of no avail. The horizon closes in decisively about a man and no matter upon which card the money is staked, the game is always lost.

We cannot say Antonioni's intentions have been perfectly fulfilled, for there are various weak elements in the staging and filming. The casting of some of the female roles is particularly disconcerting; the charm of the actresses does not seem appropriate to their parts. Best are Steve Cochran as the young worker and Alida Valli as his woman, both of whom have with real ability given life to the story. The filming evokes a lyric atmosphere with somber and suggestive overtones but it is harmed by some excessive hesitations which should not occur in a story which lends itself to compact and anguished progression.

These same weaknesses indicate a difficulty in expressing oneself completely and openly, an acceptance of the inexorable decline of hope, an ebbing of the strength of life. The tacit but desperate rebellion, the subdued pathos of *Il Grido*, is characteristic of a destiny, of a tired "mestiere di vivere," ending in ceaseless flight. In this way Antonioni reflects, with open-heartedness and sincerity, the vicissitudes of his world and of his generation as seen at close range.

*Cronaca di un amore* (*Story of a Love*), *Le amiche* (*The Friends*) and to a lesser degree *I vinti* (*The Vanquished*) are detached and lucid psychological examinations of the internal crises of the middle class. This class has suc-

ceeded by now in re-establishing itself after the damages of the post-war period, but it is tormented and insecure. Antonioni makes discreet, sober and very shrewd use of the formal techniques of the film medium to achieve those psychological illuminations which are his essential purpose. The sets and the performances of the actors, to which he has given minute attention, enable him to evoke states of mind rather than presenting theatrical experiences. It is the dramatic development which sometimes fails, but when it succeeds in clarifying the conflicts, the vision becomes intimate, modest, touching, and lucid. Perhaps these are the only films produced since the neo-realistic movement which have testified with sincerity to our inward vicissitudes.

Federico Fellini possesses a much more extroverted personality, and this has manifested itself in some brilliant and spectacular results. He unites an excellent quality of humorous observation with reserved bitterness. He brings substance to moral judgements and at times touches upon the metaphysical. One observes in him, in fact, a certain ingenuous dilettantism. He is a gifted director with great ability for animation and lively revelation.

His first films come from the provincial or peripheral world: *Luci del varietà* (*Vaudeville Lights*) in collaboration with Lattuada, and *Lo sceicco bianco* (*The White Sheik*.) These are pleasing sociological descriptions, at once sarcastic and disenchanted, affectionate and objective. In *La strada* (*The Road*) and *Le notti di Cabiria* (*The Nights of Cabiria*) everyday characters are projected into a more unreal world; they are fixed in their drama, now overturned and now liberated by the major spiritual entities which reign on earth. In spite of spiritualistic tendencies, this is a freshly realistic vein and produces concrete results.

*La dolce vita* (*Sweet Life*) presents a frank and truthful picture of the way of life of a certain parasitic society which has attached itself to our familiar social structure. It is the same story we find in *Satyricon*, *I ragionamenti*, or *Er commedione* (*The big comedy*) although these works were nourished by very different energies. It is a story



that has existed since the Roman empire, and *La dolce vita* is one of its immediate and minor variations, comparable in some ways to that fresco of Rome which Moravia gives us. We know that in Rome, as in any other great capital, such practices and vices thrive, but in Rome we find the additional characteristics of bitter cynicism and disgusted frivolity.

The real people in this life, as do Fellini's characters, appear to follow all the accepted beliefs, but actually act according to a very different morality. It is in this difference between appearance and actuality that we find the tragic significance of their lives. We see it in their behavior even when it cannot be observed upon their faces.

When Fellini applies himself to a description of this milieu his results are surprising, shocking, truthful. In a "saison en enfer," his hero passes from episode to episode in the pursuit of superficial and false phantoms, while his personality is gradually suppressed and compromised, moving towards eventual destruction. Fellini is successful in depicting this parasitic, inert, inconsistent, unstructured environment, but he is less successful when he approaches, with sudden and unexplainable tragic attitude, subjects treated intellectually. Here he becomes forced, and even annoys us by presenting situations which smack of the cliché when they should provide clarity. Similarly, the exaggerated tones given to the false miracle, and the picture of lost humanity assembled there, make it appear an artificial and affected caricature. This is increased by the fact that they are reminiscent of the central scenes from Billy Wilder's *Un asso nella manica* (*An Ace in the Sleeve*). Of course, the situations and social atmospheres of the two pictures are not really comparable. But the intrinsic weakness of those two episodes in *La dolce vita* which lie outside the restricted boundaries of the life it portrays does not affect the validity of the rest of the chronicle.

The cinematic story makes use of rich and varied resources, of powerful themes and symbolism. The camera is used with unusual freedom, tending to assume the abilities of the human eye itself. The staging offers images which take

on greater value than that of their actual historical meaning. As usual in Fellini there is humor, although a humor basically so bitter as to become tragic. (We note here the influence of Flaiano.) While the spiritual and metaphysical symbolism leaves us perplexed, on the whole the force of truth guides Fellini's hand. This same theme has often been illuminated, and with very great profundity and vastness, as by Stroheim. *La dolce vita* has its own cinematic values: a vast, fresh power of vital attraction, the reflection of all time as well as of the ephemeral and transitory.

## Italian Politics Since The War: A Study in Contrasts

JOSEPH LAPALOMBARA

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The last fifteen years of Italian politics can be alternatively described as spectacularly fruitful or as depressingly barren. Everyone must agree, however, that no period except, perhaps, the crucial years of the Risorgimento has been more momentous for the nation. Between the war's end and the present Italy jettisoned the monarchy and switched to republican government, moved toward left-wing revolution and then away from it, fell perilously near complete economic disaster and then established one of the strongest economies in Western Europe.

It would be unfortunately misleading were we to spotlight political failures exclusively, leaving in the shadows of unrecognition the many accomplishments registered between the fall of Fascism and present crisis government. We must, for example, applaud the political leadership and the massive human effort that went into Italy's "miraculous" economic reconstruction. Current indicators of prosperity — higher wages, automobiles, well-stocked retail outlets, a strong balance of payments, bouyant indexes of production, and the like — may dim the image of those earlier years in which the nation tottered on the brink of oblivion.

World War II dealt Italy a truly staggering blow. National wealth was reduced by fully one-third of its pre-war

value. It is important to recall that ten per cent of the available buildings were destroyed, sixty per cent of the major highways and over eight thousand bridges were damaged or totally wiped out, ninety per cent of the port facilities were rendered unusable, as were forty per cent of the railroads, twenty per cent of the hospital space, and ninety per cent of a proud merchant fleet. These were only the more dramatic prices that war exacted. In the vital sectors of agricultural and industrial production similar paralyzing damage was everywhere apparent. The Italian population, demoralized by the outcome of "Fascism's Folly," faced imminent threats of disease and starvation. Governmental agencies, called upon to cope with these many crises, confronted not merely the political vacuum created by the demise of Fascism but also an alarming fiscal situation in which public revenues had fallen to one-tenth of the pre-war level.

The story of how Italy, with outside aid, moved from such a seemingly hopeless situation to her present relative strength and prosperity deserves more attention than it has been accorded by an American press that considers events in Togoland or the Cameroons more newsworthy than Italian affairs. Under the extraordinarily able leadership of Alcide De Gasperi, the *lira* was strengthened, the roads and railroads were rebuilt and improved, tens of thousands of schoolrooms and living units were repaired and constructed, agriculture was restored, and industrial production was pushed to levels undreamed of in the desperate days of 1945-1946. Italy's sacrifices and achievements in the battle to heal the nation rival those of any other country that suffered immense damage as the result of war. Regardless of what we might say about the things that *were not* done politically, it is necessary to acknowledge that the "political class" was equal to many of the frightening demands of the immediate postwar era.

Other equally impressive entries can be made in Italy's political ledger. Despite what the campaign slogans of the Christian Democrats would have us believe, the danger of Communism is no longer imminent. To be sure, the demo-



cratic parties have failed to cut significantly into the Communist party's appeal to the electorate. Yet, the crisis atmosphere of 1948, when the possibility of a left-wing dictatorship could not be discounted, is no longer present. To a considerable extent, and for reasons that we shall not try to analyze here, the Communist party has lost much of its revolutionary fervor and has become essentially an electoral phenomenon. By this I mean that Communist leaders seem more interested in holding on to political office than in bringing a brave new Marxist world into existence. The challenge or threat from the extreme left is still there, of course, but it is neither of precisely the same nature nor of the same order of magnitude that one associates with the earlier postwar years.

Similarly, the threat from the extreme Right has been held to manageable proportions. To some degree, particularly in the elections of 1953 and 1958, the Monarchist votes were absorbed by the Liberal party and the conservative wing of the Christian Democrats. Neo-Fascism, the other force of the Right, appears to have reached a plateau of strength, with its centers of electoral following limited to a few central and southern provinces. Only the completely doctrinaire or superficial observer would argue that the heirs of Mussolini and of the Republic of Salò can peacefully come to power in the immediate future.

Holding the line against the political extremes in Italy involves as a corollary the growth of democratic institutions. Thus, relatively free elections, vigorous inter-party competition, and heavy voter participation are now the rule. There are those, of course, who view the large turn-outs at the polls as a mixed blessing. One wonders, for example, whether the illiterate, and the millions of women who have limited knowledge of and almost complete disinterest in political issues, make a positive contribution to the evolution of democracy. The question takes on particular importance when one considers that the dominant position of Christian Democracy is strongly tied to the ability of the party — openly aided by the clergy — to attract a great majority of the women voters.

Nevertheless, Italy's elections are an important symptom of the growth of democratic processes. The same thing may be said of the partial transformation of the political parties from mere ideological warring factions to politically aggregating instrumentalities, in some of which concrete programs of economic reform take on growing importance. Curiously, there are those in Italy (most recently Cesare Merzagora, who resigned as President of the Senate) who lament the growth of strong, policy-oriented political parties. There exists a widespread fear of the party *apparati*. These apparatuses, or party bureaucracies, are denounced as aberrations, as a source of unwarranted interference in "normal" political processes, and as an unfortunate cause of governmental crises. There is evidently a failure to understand that modern democratic government, at least in a country such as Italy, *must* be party government if the parties themselves are to make any sense. A unitary parliamentary system, such as the Constitution anticipates, is unthinkable without the presence of strong, policy-oriented parties in which the leaders are both able and willing to influence what takes place in the legislative halls. Rather than injuring parliamentary government, strong parties can aid it immeasurably. Italy's growing political crisis is due in part to the *essential internal weakness* of the Christian Democratic party, rather than to the strength of its apparatus.

Also important in the growth of democracy are the Constitutional Court and the greatly proliferated voluntary associations. The former was established only in recent years, after a decade of foot-dragging by Christian Democratic governments. Its importance to Italian democracy is attested by the forceful manner in which the Court proceeded to declare unconstitutional various legislative and administrative survivals from the Fascist era. Jealous of their prerogatives, the legislature and the Cabinet have not always responded favorably to the Court's decisions. In one instance, the refusal of a minister to adhere to a Court decision voiding aspects of the law on public security led to the resignation of Enrico De Nicola, the Court's first

President (Chief Justice) and one of Italy's most eminent jurists. De Nicola's subsequent death has not diminished the antagonism between the legislative and judicial branches. We can expect prolonged debate in this controversy, but the nature of the debate itself is evidence that new and important institutions are sinking roots into Italian political soil.

Voluntary associations, the thousands of interest groups that have emerged since the war, constitute both a problem for and an affirmation of democracy. Insofar as some of these groups have gained privileged access to points of political decision-making, or have succeeded in corrupting legislative and administrative officials, Italian democracy is plagued by a problem that is universally present in pluralistic societies. However, the very existence of a pluralistic arrangement goes a long way toward minimizing the chances of the government's becoming completely arbitrary in its treatment of citizens. Like political parties, voluntary associations are the stuff of which free societies are constructed.

It is natural to wonder why Italy, in the years since the war, should have accomplished as much as she has. One good reason is that for a time after the war there was a common desire for liberation from the past and for bold new political planning and policy. This feeling united the heterogeneous mass of political parties that formed the early governments. However, the ultimate objectives of the Communist, Socialist, and Christian Democratic parties were so diverse that long-range collaboration among them was not a realistic possibility. The political honeymoon was of short duration; Italy is now confronted with a situation fraught with the most sinister dangers for a still-nascent democracy. In a context of political fragmentation, the failures of the last fifteen years take on enormous importance.

One should not conclude from this that the political failures of the Italian Republic result exclusively from the lack of cooperation among the parties. For five years, 1948 to 1953, the Christian Democrats ruled the country with absolute majorities in both houses of Parliament; from 1953 to the present that same party, with varying allies,

has been in the legislative driver's seat. Thus, the failures of the political system are inevitably the failures of Christian Democracy; the government's inability to deal meaningfully with certain vital problems is basically a shortcoming of Christian Democratic leadership. These men must absorb the bulk of the blame for failure, just as they insist on taking the lion's share of praise for the positive results of political action.

What are the lingering problems that should be highlighted? Chief among them is the still massive unemployment that no degree of governmental legerdemain can obscure. Impressive economic strides forward have not overtaken the nagging inability of the economy to accommodate all of those who enter the labor market each year. Emigration once disposed of these labor surpluses, but today the number of Italians who leave the country each year is less than half that of the job seekers who are disappointed. For every city in which there is economic prosperity and near-full employment, such as Turin, there are dozens such as Naples where unemployment persists at depression proportions. For every instance of improved agricultural prosperity, one can uncover vast zones where the unemployed are legion and where those who do work as agricultural day laborers are compensated at a bare subsistence level. Like so many of the problems that were to be dynamically attacked in the vaunted "slancio rinnovatore" of 1946, unemployment lingers on at essentially the same level.

This failure to provide employment has broader implications. At the war's end the major problem for emerging democracy was that of socially, economically, and politically integrating the working masses into society. This would have entailed not merely the provision of more jobs but also the progressive spreading of socio-economic rights without the endangering of democratic freedoms. Only through such a transformation of the traditional social structure could one conceive of releasing the millions of voters who are still "frozen" in the Communist party. Today, we are forced to observe that the masses remain on the periphery of the social system and, what is even worse, that some of the



most important of the democratic freedoms have been weakened rather than strengthened.

For example, freedom of the press, and of the mass media, can best be described as extremely tenuous. Aside from the news organs owned by the political parties, the Italian press is largely in the hands of special interest groups. Were the government identified at least in part with those social classes that are unrepresented in the major newspapers, it might serve as a necessary antidote to the conservative outpouring that characterizes the daily press. As a matter of fact, recent right-of-center governments have effected tacit agreements with the so-called independent press — agreements that involve, as the London *Economist* recently noted, a collusion between government officials and newspaper editors to silence criticism.

This same curtailment of free inquiry and criticism can be detected in the other mass media. It is no secret that the government, which through various means controls the production of motion pictures, discourages the type of film commentary that we associate with the outstanding neo-realist productions of the early postwar years. It is understood today that the government wants films to be "happy," not "depressing," with an emphasis on the lighter and pleasanter side of life, rather than on those aspects of Italian existence that stress basic social problems. Films like "Bicycle Thief" and "Paisan" are said to create an unfortunate image of Italy abroad. The result of this is the blatant aping of Hollywood that has characterized Italian motion pictures over the last several years.

Equally damaging to free expression in this medium is the open cooperation between Christian Democratic governments and organized Catholicism. An increasing proportion of the motion-picture houses are owned and operated by parish churches. Officials of Catholic Action are ready to assert that they regard this control of distribution, which is favored by the licensing agencies of the government, as a means of dictating the kinds of products the Italian public may view. Should Catholic Action achieve its goal, films, whether internally produced or imported from abroad,

would simply not be shown unless they met the standards of "morality" established by Catholic Action.

Italian radio is in no better condition. Controlled by the government, it has become a subtle instrument for Christian Democratic aggrandizement. This is particularly apparent when one analyzes news coverage during electoral campaigns; but at all times the kind of social criticism emanating from the radio is strictly innocuous. The only other major network is owned by the Vatican, from which one can scarcely expect to hear broadcasts that probe the weaknesses and shortcomings of the ruling Catholic party. Were it not for the existence of the daily newspapers, controlled by other political parties, and several excellent periodicals associated with the Radicals, the mass media would be a monolithic instrument for political conformity. This is a singularly alarming circumstance for a society that must still demonstrate a capacity to manage itself democratically.

Additional grounds exist for viewing the last fifteen years of Italian politics as unproductive. Notwithstanding all the fanfare about government programs, a dynamic policy for the development of Southern Italy has not materialized. The long-neglected South continues to languish in a complicated maze of political inattention, *clientelismo*, inefficiency, and corruption. The Milazzo phenomenon in Sicily was partly a protest against the continued historical failure of Rome to deal aggressively with Italy's own "underdeveloped" area. Signor Milazzo symbolized, too, a revulsion against the reluctance with which Christian Democracy has sought to implement the sections of the Constitution dealing with regionalism. The most recently proposed legislation on regional government was only a fainthearted attempt to demonstrate that the central government is aware of the need for doing something to bring such regional governments into existence. The attempt will be meaningless as long as the major criterion for regional "autonomy" is conformance to the wishes of the Christian Democratic government at Rome. The political decentralization des-

cribed in the Constitution remains a hazy expectation rather than an implemented reality.

The government has also failed to effect the long-promised reform of the bureaucracy, or to overhaul the state's participation in economic enterprise through the giant instrumentality of IRI (Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale). The bureaucracy remains a hopeless morass of special privilege and inefficiency. Rather than streamlining governmental organization, Signor Segni created two new ministries during his second stint as Premier. Little or nothing has been done about the widespread featherbedding, or about the multiplication of unsavory deals and procedures that cause Italians to speak of *il sottogoverno*. More important, perhaps, there is little evidence that the bureaucrats have developed a sense of public service, a self-image that would lead them to behave as if they existed for the convenience of the citizenry rather than to harass and intimidate it. A generation of public administrators nurtured under Fascism have reached positions of top leadership where, often in league with some Christian Democrats, they manage to frustrate sporadic and half-earnest attempts at reform.

Even more deplorable is the situation in those sectors of the bureaucracy that supposedly manage and control the vast industrial empire owned by the state. A few years ago a Ministry of State Participation was established ostensibly for the purpose of making the state-owned industries examples of progressive and efficient operation. Properly managed, these enterprises would provide not merely industrial leadership but also the yardstick needed to regulate the rapacious activities of the private industrial sectors. It is perhaps indicative of the cynicism of Italian politics that few, if any, government officials ever expected this ministry to do the work for which it was created.

One of the most dramatic failures of Italian politics is characterized by the re-emergence of the anti-clerical issue. Alcide De Gasperi greatly feared this and warned against the unwholesome consequences of political battles fought in terms of church versus state. The causes of this development are many and varied. Important among them

is the unwillingness of organized Catholicism to minimize its direct political involvement. Beginning with the electoral campaign of 1948, when Catholic Action, through its Civic Committees, played a major role in the victory of Christian Democracy, the church has sought to extend its influence into all branches of government and politics. Within the Christian Democratic party, Catholic groups demand and obtain the right to name their own candidates and to veto others who are unacceptable to the Vatican. Inside the bureaucracy, a premium attaches to affiliation with Catholic Action, and the direct intervention of the clergy in bureaucratic decisions has often reached proportions that alarm the more self-denying officials of the church. As leaders of Catholic Action put it, Catholicism purports to have a total formula for human existence, and it is fitting and proper that devoted Catholics should make their desires and influence felt in the political realm.

There are many Catholics, inside and outside of Christian Democracy, who deplore this interference. They fully recognize that it has contributed to the growing attacks on the church, as well as on the political party that seems to stand idly by while Catholic *integralismo* tightens its web of control over the various segments of society.

Christian Democracy often appears impotent in the face of such dangerous developments. The crucial reason for this weakness lies in the contradictions and current crisis within the party itself — a crisis that is immediately transferred to the country at large because the Christian Democratic party has been and remains the only governing force in Italy.

No one can seriously doubt the profound trouble that now besets Christian Democracy. It erupted in public when the "snipers" caused Fanfani's downfall in 1959, and when the second Segni government almost completely reversed the policies begun by Fanfani. Such striking *trasformismo* had been unknown previously, even in the days of such political magicians as Depretis and Giolitti. After all, the same party placed in power a Fanfani who toyed with an "opening to the Left" and a Segni who effected an "open-



ing to the Right." Italy has been treated to the spectacle of a government moving in a direction diametrically opposed to that chosen by the voters at the polls.

It is Confessionalism that holds together in Christian Democracy the most diverse ideological groups. Within such an organization a compromise that can lead to some positive action is not simple to achieve. Thus, while the party platform that was hammered out before the 1958 elections is clearly a center-left document, it is apparent that large segments of the party do not agree with it and have little intention of making it official government policy. In governmental practice, therefore, Signor Segni confounds political analysts by calling on the Monarchists to help "defend the Republic" and on Neo-Fascists to "defend civil rights."

Under these circumstances there is always the danger that politics will become merely a power game, along the lines of historical *trasformismo*. In this game, no one seriously intends to articulate or to implement important policy because any such attempt brings about a cabinet crisis. The goal of the game is essentially that of keeping the "ins" in power and the "outs" out of it, whatever may be the price to the country. Legislatively, this strategy necessarily results in immobilism of the kind that has been rapidly growing during the last few years.

Another danger inherent in the situation is the possible creation of a Christian Democratic "regime." The Christian Democrats have been continuously in power for a dozen years; the temptation to manipulate politics so as to perpetuate this state of affairs becomes overwhelming. The possibility of achieving this end is increased by the absence of a clear-cut democratic alternative to the present ruling party. It is this that lends ominous implications to the failure of Christian Democracy to reach a *modus operandi* with the Socialists led by Pietro Nenni.

The search for agreement between Christian Democrats and Socialists is no longer conducted with even the limited fervor of the past. Generous individuals are understandably discouraged at the meager results of negotiations that have

been underway intermittently for more than a decade. Within the Christian Democratic party, those whose wish to achieve agreement with Nenni appears sincere are now in a minority. In the Socialist party, Nenni and his "autonomists" have been seriously weakened by their continued failure to deliver the kind of pact that would eventually return the Socialists to the business of sharing the responsibility of government. It is also apparent (witness the *Osservatore Romano* attack on socialism while Fanfani was moving toward Nenni) that the Catholic Church continues to rule out the possibility of a political arena in which both Christian Democracy and Nenni Socialism are available as governing elites.

A new political formula is desperately needed if Italy is to avoid serious political degeneration. The concept of a four-party coalition died in 1953 and cannot be revived. Centrism was based on the peril of Communism and on considerable affinity among the parties of the coalition. With the curtailment of the Communist menace, and the development of important differences among the Center parties, the temporary expedient had to evaporate, as it did in France.

The only realistic long-range formula remains one in which the Christian Democrats exclude the Communists on the Left, and the Liberals, Monarchists and Neo-Fascists on the Right. This would leave the Nenni Socialists, Saragat Socialists, Republicans and Radicals available to provide the dynamic program that is so obviously and desperately needed. It is perhaps premature to predict what damage will result from the continued failure of the Christian Democrats to facilitate such an alignment. One thing is fairly certain, however: through institutionalized *trasformismo*, the creation of a Christian Democratic "regime," or the choice of a "solution" similar to that which occurred in France, Italian democracy's hard-won gains of the last decade and a half would be reversed.

Fortunately for Italy, there are many persons and organizations who clearly understand the gravity of the crisis. One such group recently commented that "... we have no illusions: authentic democratic forces are in a minority in

the country, even if parties of democratic inspiration are in a majority in Parliament. A free political conscience and habit are not formed in ten years of free suffrage . . . ”

Those of us whose interest in Italy goes beyond that of the dispassionate researcher will trust that the accomplishments rather than the failures of Italian politics will succeed in asserting themselves in the future. This is merely another way of hoping that the period 1945-1947 was a point of historical departure and not of termination.

## Enrico Mattei: The Government in Industry

T. C. QUACKENBOSS

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Much has been said in recent months of the Italian political scene. As this is written, Italy again is going through the process of searching for a new combination — a new political balance — by which to govern the country.

Some fearful observers have pointed out that the Italian governmental system has begun to show the same signs of weakness as that of pre-De Gaulle France. They lament that there is no prospective equivalent to De Gaulle on the Italian horizon.

The Italian political situation is not likely to change rapidly, because there is no De Gaulle, and because there is also no pressure from a colonial war. It is probable that a new government will be formed, and a political balance will be reached again. There are many underlying reasons for this, not the least of them being the rapid growth of the Italian economy. Italy's strong economic and financial position is due to a combination of many factors.

Of these factors, one of the most important (and certainly one of the most interesting) is Enrico Mattei. What is this man like, and what has he done? He has had a bad press in America, and Americans have been told that he is unfriendly. But he has some strong friends and would like to have more. Perhaps a look from another perspective may help to round out the picture.



Before going further I should frankly say that I am an admirer of this man; I hold him in respect and affection. However, I am not blind to the fact that no one is perfect. I try to write without bias.

At the end of World War II, the Italians appraised their state industrial holdings and decided to liquidate or otherwise dispose of many of them. It will be remembered that the immediate postwar era was an era of professors. Because the Fascist regime tolerated few critics, almost no one with administrative experience escaped the black-list of former Fascist membership. One of the few remaining sources of mature judgment and leadership was the universities. Hence a professor (Einaudi) became President, another became premier for the long period of postwar reconstruction, and many administrative positions went to university men. Strongly influenced by the Conservative Austrian school of economics (Hayek, Von Mises), these men brought to Italy the views of conservative liberalism. Their initial plan was to get the state out of business.

Only after a more careful appraisal was it seen clearly that such a course would destroy what little order was left in the economy. Professor Saraceno has told me of the change in viewpoint which followed World War II in regard to the holdings of IRI (Italy's largest industrial combine, a state-controlled industry group going back to pre-war days). It was then decided to maintain the sound state-held investments, chiefly to avoid "rocking the boat."

This was the climate into which Enrico Mattei stepped at the beginning of his career in the petroleum industry. After serving as a partisan leader of Christian Democrat forces against the northern Fascist and Nazi armies, Mattei had been elected to Parliament. By a Parliamentary resolution, he was then assigned to liquidate the defunct petroleum company AGIP, begun by the Fascist in 1926 in a dismal effort to make Italy self-sufficient in petroleum. The company had found few hydrocarbons, and its marketing facilities were in ruins. Rolling equipment had been confiscated by the Germans; bulk distribution plants had been wrecked; and nothing was up-to-date. AGIP's refinery at Venice was

heavily damaged. A less resolute man than Mattei would have considered the situation hopeless.

But Mattei became convinced that the Exploration Department of AGIP had the know-how to find gas. He gambled on its success — and won. In the rich Po valley, gas was discovered in a succession of strikes, beginning in 1946. Fortunately a pipeline company, SNAM, had already been chartered, and it began to construct pipelines to transport the gas to the markets of industrial Milan and other fuel-hungry cities in the north. Mattei became a national hero. There was no further thought of selling the company for junk.

Once having found gas, Mattei at least had something to build on. What Italy desperately needed at that time was an accumulation of capital. Despite political pressure from the extreme left wing to give the gas away to the people (its owners) or to sell it at cost, Mattei shrewdly decided on a pricing policy which would link the price of natural gas to the price of industrial fuel oil in Milan. The relationship was set up so as to encourage an expansion of the gas markets, while permitting orderly growth and an accumulation of profits. With these profits Mattei began to build Italy's number 1 petroleum marketing company.

Today Italy's roads are dotted with service stations displaying the familiar sign of the black dog with six legs, breathing fire, on a yellow background. This symbol of AGIP's premium gasoline became the object of particular attention in 1956 when Mattei broke precedent in Italy by marketing the industry's first 100 octane motor-fuel — to the consternation of AGIP's competitors who had been cozily sleeping, content with their 93-octane agreement.

AGIP's products are of high quality, equal to those of the majors in the U.S.A. AGIP's beautiful service stations are expensive, and Mattei has been accused of spending too much to build them; but he replies that somebody must set the pace. AGIP's motels (which are really suburban hotels with large parking spaces, and prices aimed to suit the average motorist) range from good to superb. They

have given Italy a new standard in accommodations for travellers.

Along with the development of AGIP, Mattei undertook the development of ANIC, another prewar Fascist enterprise which was intended to produce gasoline from Albanian crude oil and from coal. It was once half owned by Montecatini. During the war two refineries (at Leghorn and at Bari) were virtually destroyed by bombing. After some initial financial moves to consolidate ownership, the Italians sold a half interest in the two refineries to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey in order to provide new capital for rehabilitation of the plants. The resulting subsidiary company (STANIC) is now the largest refined products producer in Italy.

In 1953, ANIC decided to expand into the petrochemicals field, and planning was begun on what was to be the largest petrochemical plant in Italy. Today this giant plant, using gas from a new field discovery at Ravenna, produces annually 75,000 tons of synthetic rubber, and hundreds of thousands of tons of nitrogen fertilizers.

Other industrial developments in the group of companies led by Mattei are important, if not spectacular. A large heavy metal manufacturing company at Florence produces oilfield drill rigs, heavy compressors, and other equipment for industry. The group manufactures gas stoves to complement its business in LPG, known as "AGIP Gas." The AGIP fleet of tankers which transports crude oil to its refineries also now commands respect, with two new 35,000-ton vessels just added.

A controversial development, in the minds of critical observers, is the new company AGIP Nuclear which has under construction what will be the largest nuclear power station in Europe (200,000 Kw). This station will employ a British-designed reactor of the Calder Hall type. The critics ask why the state's hydrocarbon industry should build this plant, which involves a heavy investment indeed. But in an era when fossil fuel supplies are limited, and when shipments of oil to the Mediterranean can be drastically cut by the closing of the Suez Canal, it would seem

wise for Italy to develop technical ability in the field of nuclear energy. Such is the view of Mattei, and so far his critics are distinctly in the minority.

All these developments foretold a sprawling industrial empire back some years ago. In 1953, Mattei asked Parliament to make a better rationalization of the state's holdings by setting up a single holding company to control the state's portion of all the operating units previously described. As a result Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) was born. It is a corporation 100% owned by the Italian government. It is self-financing, and by law pays 65% of its profits to the government treasury. In addition to this it pays the usual Italian direct and indirect taxes at lower operating levels. ENI issues bonds and acquires loans, but none of these bear a government guarantee, and its interest rates must compete in the market for capital. The group's major operating companies also may (and do) provide financing for their own investment needs.

By the law that established ENI, the holding company must spend 15% of its profits on research and education. Actually ENI spends more than this for these purposes.

On the record, ENI profits look small for so large an enterprise. However, one must remember that Italian fiscal laws and accounting practices with regard to writeoffs and charges are vastly different from those of the U.S.A., and a direct comparison of ENI with a typical American company is not possible.

It *can* be said that the empire has grown strong. Its assets today are over \$2 billion and its sales probably exceed \$600 million yearly. Again, it is not possible to give exact figures because some financial data have not been released for publication, and because of the fact that some subsidiaries are less than half owned. It is enough to say that the business is large, and employs today over 20,000 people.

While his enterprises were expanding, Mattei continued the search for oil. Some light crude oil of high quality was discovered in the Po Valley, along with more gas fields. The Abruzzi field also produced oil, but the quantities were



small and results disappointing. Mattei decided to look abroad. In partnership with Petrofina, Mattei set up an Egyptian subsidiary and drilled successfully for oil in the Sinai peninsula. This field now yields a crude oil useful for fuel.

But it was the move into Iran that first really disturbed Mattei's international competitors. This was when Mattei established the now famous 75-25 deal. Mattei was at first roundly attacked in the American press for upsetting the traditional 50-50 split. Then, after a more mature look at the agreement by one of Esso's top directors, the news was released that Mattei hadn't broken the 50-50 deal after all.

Well, what is the deal?

Mattei diagnosed, shrewdly, that what the Middle East and Arab countries wanted was *participation* rather than cash alone. The underdeveloped countries, all highly nationalistic, want a feeling of "belonging." The Mattei plan, then, was to join in a 50-50 partnership with the oil-producing nation to set up an oil-producing company.

This company, producing crude oil was to pay 50% of its profits as royalty per the usual Middle East agreement. In theory, this preserved the 50-50 tradition; but there was a difference: the 50% retained would be shared equally between the two owners — thus giving the oil-producing nation 75% of the profits. The Italians put up all the capital for the operation, and permit the oil-producing nation to pay in their 50% share of the capital investment out of future profits. It's an arrangement in which the Italians take capital risks. Not long after Mattei made his famous deal with Iran, Standard Oil of Indiana decided the plan was sound and followed the same arrangement in leasing a contiguous property to that of the ENI subsidiary. In addition, the Americans paid a heavy bonus, non-refundable, to obtain their concession. Comparatively speaking, Mattei's deal in Iran was a shrewd one for the Italians. Drilling, so far, looks very promising.

ENI *did* finally hit crude oil in Italian soil — in Sicily, at Gela. This crude oil proved to be extremely dif-

ficult to handle: heavy, highly asphaltic, and high in sulfur. Mattei decided to turn these disadvantages into assets, and as a result, ENI (ANIC) plans to build another giant petrochemical and fertilizer plant. For example, the sulfur of the crude oil will be used to produce sulfuric acid, one of the important products used in making phosphate fertilizers and many other chemicals.

Since the Iranian deal, Mattei has extended his leaseholding and exploration operations into Morocco, the Sudan, Libya, and other countries. The Morocco agreement also includes plans to build a refinery.

At this point one may ask if the crude oil search isn't being overdone — with new companies furiously drilling in the Middle East, Spain opening up to exploration, and of course the French development of the Sahara. It depends from what point of view you look at it. One thing is certain: the world contains an *enormous* amount of oil (we are beginning to understand this more every day), and much of it is located near the Mediterranean basin. With prices sure to go down due to increasing supply, do we need to continue the feverish search?

*Probably, yes.* We need to produce increasing supplies of fossil fuels at low costs if the economic revolution of our time is to continue; and oil will be the fuel for industrial Europe for generations to come. The cost improvements looked for oh-so-hopefully in nuclear power have been slow to come, and tremendous problems in this field (such as waste disposal, high capital investment, etc.) are still unsolved.

One point to note is the low cost of producing Middle-East crude oil compared to the excessively high price structure maintained in the Mediterranean in past years by the international companies. For the "posted price" of Mediterranean oil was the *U.S. Gulf Coast price plus freight*. This incredible system of pricing has been maintained for years, providing a profit margin per ton of crude oil produced which is huge when compared to the slim profits realized by the marginal U.S. producer. As everybody knows, U.S. crude oil prices are artificially high due to

import quota restrictions. And this artificially high price has been the basis of even higher Mediterranean posted prices! Under the pressure of increasing quantities of crude oil supplies, this phony pricing system is now collapsing.

Mattei intends to do his share in bringing the new crude oil supplies to useful markets. He sees the desirability for plenty of oil for Italy, and intends to help provide it. However, his ambitions do not stop there. In his view, Italy should share in world markets, now and in the future.

To this end, AGIP is expanding into the marketing of petroleum products in North Africa, and also in the Sudan, Morocco, and other points. And a bigger program is beginning to be realized: the expansion of AGIP into southern Europe. First on the schedule are southern Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

Of interest to all Common Market participants, directly or indirectly, is Mattei's new plan for an oil pipeline to run from Genoa into Switzerland, using the new Simplon vehicle tunnel for right-of-way. This line will supply oil to Milanese and Swiss consumers, and a future extension will take the line into Germany. This development is already planned, including joint financing arrangements with West German capital participating. When the French try to move into this market with Sahara oil, they will find Mattei already there.

Marketing of Ravenna's rubber and fertilizer production presents an altogether different problem. These products are usually sold in large quantities to intermediate owners, distributing in their own channels. The first interest of ENI of course is the Italian market. Mattei concluded a deal to distribute Ravenna's nitrogen fertilizers in Italy through Federconsorzi, Italy's largest agricultural cooperative, only after extensive negotiations in which tight controls were drawn to prevent profiteering. Mattei changed the whole *retail* pricing structure for fertilizer by forcing a uniform warehouse price system designed to give the small, poverty-stricken farmer a break. The price of fertilizer was reduced overall by 20% — and in some of Italy's most feudal locations, this change should

have far-reaching results on the economic standards of the marginal farmer.

Nevertheless, after supplying Italy's domestic markets, there remains a surplus of fertilizer and rubber to be sold abroad. In selling this surplus for export, Mattei became acquainted with the Russians and with Red China. These nations need to pay, wherever possible, through the exchange of goods. It is here that Mattei's activities are being criticized, for he has accepted Russian crude oil in payment for ANIC rubber. Mattei knows Communist tactics and harbors no delusions. ENI can use the oil very conveniently, and his deals are based strictly on *quid pro quo*.

Mattei's answer to the critics is very simple: he points out that the whole western world is tending to trade more and more with the Iron Curtain countries. And in selling rubber to Moscow, Mattei merely replaced a contract already in effect, whereby the rubber Moscow needed was supplied by Firestone of Canada.

It is time now to look at ENI's structure in terms of management, men, and methods.

Italy's traditional centralized management methods do not work well in such a diverse and giant enterprise as today's ENI Group. Mattei foresaw this as early as in 1955. At that time he began a complete management study of the Group, led by a team of U.S. management consultants in cooperation with the Italian managers. This team worked for three years at reshaping the management structure. A key feature of the new management organization plan is decentralization. But this presented a problem: how to obtain a sufficient number of trained managers?

There was only one answer: develop men. As a result, ENI set up two business schools. One was designed to give young university graduates a postgraduate year in the hydrocarbons business (Italy's universities are traditionally classical, having no business course). The second, now called *Istituto Direzionale e Tecnico* — ENI, has a permanent Italian staff, and also employs U.S. professors on term contracts to teach both business and hydrocarbons engineering subjects. All of the ENI managers attend man-



agement development courses; and the Institute has already supplied ENI's growing needs for petroleum engineers. A large group of refinery engineers is now in training.

At the same time, ENI and each operating company installed management engineering departments to develop and activate modern management techniques. Typical of the progressive moves made in this direction is a current program designed to make a *job evaluation* of all the 20,000 people employed by ENI and to set up a unified wage and salary administration. The carrying out of this program alone will require more than a year's work for a team of 85 trained job analysts. Again, the Group is now installing the most modern IBM computing equipment for its business needs.

What of the men around Mattei? Mattei has a knack for selecting good ones. His two top subordinates are Eugenio Cefis, who is in charge of planning and programming for the Group, and also responsible for ANIC; and Raffaele Girotti, operations and control chief. In an equivalent U.S. company these men might both be called executive vice presidents. They are able, highly intelligent, and strong. Both are young, well under 50. They work incredible hours, and rarely seem tired.

Below these men are some excellent executives; but there are not enough of them. ENI will have to rely in its future development on men who have come from its business schools, mentioned above. There is a "management gap" that must still be closed.

At this point we can conclude our informational survey and do a bit of appraising. This is particularly hard for an American, because the American frames of reference simply do not fit when one deals with business in Italy.

Today we can view U.S. business as 20th-century capitalism; having as its goals production for use, as well as profit: for only useful goods and services can be sold. The supporter of U.S. private business may fear "statism" in the growth of economic power in the hands of Enrico Mattei. Mrs. Luce felt that way, and so does Mr. Zellerbach.

But the problem is not quite that simple. U.S. business

is kept flexible and "on its toes," working in the public interest, by competition in a free market. Italy *has* no free markets. Business men divide the market percentage-wise by means of quotas, and fix prices at whatever level the traffic will bear. In effect, private business is monopolized or cartelized. It is ironic that Mattei, the *only* big industrialist offering active competition on the Italian market, is often referred to as head of the "Italian State Oil Monopoly." The truth is that ENI is in no respect whatever a monopoly; its only monopolistic advantage in Italy is its exclusive lease on the Po Valley for exploration and production of hydrocarbons.

Some U.S. businessmen investing in Italy find it easy to fall into the traditional pattern of price-fixing and quotas. When Mattei won't play ball (ENI does *not* belong to Confindustria) they become angry and speak of him as anti-American. But the truth is that Mattei is strongly pro-western and actually pro-American. One of his best American friends is General Mark Clark, who awarded Mattei the U.S. Bronze Star for his war service. Mattei has concluded mutually profitable deals with a number of U.S. companies. Nuovo Pignone in Florence builds U.S. design equipment under a number of license agreements, the best-known being that with Dresser-Ideco (oil field drill rigs). And at Ravenna, Mattei has just set up a joint 50-50 company with Phillips Petroleum for the manufacture of carbon black.

Mattei's view of his trade with the Reds is that it is by no means anti-western; in fact, he feels, trade may well be a factor on the side of freedom. It depends on *what* and *how* you trade.

Nevertheless, Mattei has not got on well with some of the American companies and he has had unfavorable treatment in the U.S. press, both from the left and from the right. Some rightists may call him a statist. And not many months ago, in a critical article in the *Reporter*, Mattei was damned for behaving like a capitalist, his crime being that his enterprises make money! Mattei has been disappointed a number of times at what appears to be unfair criticism.

Mattei is a self-made man. He comes from the Marche,

an area of Italy which is peopled by good stock, but without riches. Mattei's father was a non-commissioned officer in the Carabinieri, back in the days when this was the proudest and best trained branch of the army. They were particularly noted at the time for their careful selection of personnel, which included an investigation of antecedents to eliminate any men with a criminal taint. The Carabinieri were known for their almost fanatical devotion and loyalty to the crown.

This may be a key to Mattei's behavior today. He is a devout Catholic, and extremely loyal to his church and to his friends. He harbors no delusions if a friend proves incompetent, but he will usually find a way to help those who have been loyal to him.

Mattei is highly intelligent, and realistic — particularly in politics and business. But he is also warm-hearted and somewhat emotional. He is a man of complete personal honesty, and is proud that he lives simply and economically. He is a man of culture, loving classical music and with excellent taste in modern art. His only recreation is trout fishing in the Dolomites.

About two years ago the Shah of Persia visited Mattei as his personal guest. The Shah wrote ahead, suggesting that perhaps Mattei could let the Shah have one of his houses for the visit. Mattei owns no houses, but he borrowed a yacht for the Shah's visit at Naples.

Mattei is a man of magnetic personality and a superb speaker. He often has a written speech but rarely uses it; he would much rather speak extemporaneously. To listen to Mattei is to be convinced.

The brief description of ENI, Enrico Mattei, and post-war Italy, would not be complete without some mention of the political scene, for Mattei is one of the strongest pillars of the Christian Democrats in Italy, and it is with the Christian Democrats that the fate of Italy's political future will remain.

There is talk of corruption in high government places. One remembers the U.S. political scene after 20 years of Democratic power. But more is at stake here. If the Christian

Democrats, the party of the middle, fall apart — the extremes on both sides are not pleasant to think about. Twenty years of Fascism ruined Italy. And if Communism comes to power, the whole western alliance may be destroyed.

Mattei likes neither of these alternatives. Mattei has just been confirmed for another 3-year term in office, and he will continue to support the D.C.; and the D.C. will probably continue to run the politics of Italy.



## Adriano Olivetti

GIANCARLO BUZZI

Adriano Olivetti, one of Italian industry's most distinguished leaders, died suddenly on February 27th of this year. He had been president of the Olivetti firm, of the Istituto di Urbanistica, of the UNRRA-Casas, and of the Movimento Comunità. Writer, sociologist, city-planner, he leaves a great void, not only in industry, but in Italian culture as well.

His city, which he greatly loved, will be the first to miss him. It is a small city set among mountains and hills in a somewhat sombre countryside typical of Piedmont. The quietly alive locale is rich with tradition and history — civic, political, cultural. Its people are industrious and sober, averse to change, tenacious and hard-working, and they are grounded in a solid morality. It is a pleasant town albeit dusky and tied to its past. In recent years, however, it has been subject to many new experiences. Adriano Olivetti centered his business interests in Ivrea, lavished upon it his loving care, and made it his home.

Time will not tarry in unravelling the inevitable contradictions which gather round a leading figure in his lifetime. And time makes it simpler to understand what Adriano Olivetti meant in Italy. He was possibly the only man of culture who, declining to tend the pleasurable garden of easy harvests, seriously attempted to link two diverse and often adverse dimensions, to reunite his small community with the vast world in which man sometimes feels transient and lost. The results of his efforts go beyond our country's borders; his work points up a dramatic and distressing theme, one which no nation can afford to ignore. He wanted to help men find their places in the world, to banish from their existence anxiety and perennial crisis, the precarious-

ness of life. This aim was implicit in his actions rather than openly declared; he sought to prove how an examination of culture can have universal import, how it can be non-provincial although emanating from a small province, provided the province be restudied without literary complacency and sterile complaints, provided that in the province there be hard work which creates within its bounds, on a small yet exemplary scale, an image of the world.

Olivetti's sensitivity to and interest in community development was the expression of a man whose first preoccupation was with an inquiry into cultural and spiritual matters: a sort of steady effort towards overcoming the obstacles which separate culture in theory and culture in practice, so that it becomes embodied in reality, and to a degree creates it. That this interest in cultural problems belonged to a man who was principally an industrialist gives us occasion for hope and augurs well. However, it also reminds us of how few men have made a vocation of cultural affairs. It is quite evident that Olivetti was a lone figure in his world, tolerated at times, often opposed, looked upon with that sort of benevolent skepticism with which — in a land rich with literature and rhetoric — those persons are regarded who, though truly capable in practical affairs, do not follow the beaten path, reject the notion of mere conformity, and astonish us with their zest, originality, and unusual, even bizarre, behavior. In truth, many Italian industrialists never could understand why Adriano Olivetti, rather than remaining solely the captain of industry and exploiting the intellectual endowment with which nature had enabled him to create wealth, insisted on launching social experiments, plunging into political battle, and gathering about him many intellectuals and scholars. There were those who did understand him, and perhaps even approved. (Italy is today a great deal more dynamic and free a country than many foreigners suspect.) Yet the distrust was there, very pronounced. The intellectuals and Olivetti, his extraordinary gentleness and sympathy in their regard — it was almost a legend, one of

those legends that go on being repeated even though the truth they conceal has been fully grasped.

Those who worked on projects close to his heart could run the risk of clashing with the Olivetti personality, but it was one of those gratifying risks one approaches with enthusiasm. He was both reckless and shy, pleasant yet capable of harshness, morose but eager to know men, fond of his projects and so full of faith in them as to sometimes render him an intransigent controversialist; he had an inquiring mind, an almost painful curiosity, and was open to all ideas and experiments; he was easily moved, incredibly generous, and quick to anger. But over this tangle of contradictions reigned a kindly intellect and a surprising intuitive ability. These contrasts in his personality, instead of being disturbing factors, were the source of real insight; his intellect probed into the darkest corners. Intelligence and ability imply a regard for the same in others, and working with Olivetti was psychologically rewarding. He did not force capable men into molds, but rather let them work at their own will. But he did expect accomplishments. He would demand the full measure of a man's ability. And he could be bitter if disappointed. He gave to all the chance to err and to create out of error. He was neither petty nor envious. Those close to him knew that not all his plans were realizable and that he often tried to outwit time and history. But he knew that nothing can be created without such efforts, without a radical optimism. He understood the conflicts of a mind which finds itself caught between the most abstruse and imaginative utopias, and a determination to pit itself against brute reality. The fact remains that around him, due perhaps to these great tensions, things happened, whereas the concrete acts of more practical men (who were quick to criticize Olivetti's utopianism) would either run aground on the sands of banality or proclaim the distressing fact of their mediocrity, as they immersed themselves in a flurry of bargaining and petty preoccupations.

If what Olivetti accomplished is important, the man-

ner in which he did it is even more so. We should, therefore, cast a glance at his works.

He turned a modest factory into the home of a pilot industry often regarded as a model of its kind: an admirable productive and commercial concern, a flexible dynamic organization offering employment to some twenty-five thousand workers, along with salaries and fringe benefits of the highest order, a proven leader in advertising, industrial design, and architecture. The management of this firm presided over and gave impetus to the Institute of City Planning and the UNRRA-Casas, launching and guiding to completion programs of major importance (for example in the village of Martella). Olivetti wrote many books to illustrate his theories (*Society, State, Community, Community Government, The City of Man*). He established a publishing house which was largely responsible for introducing Italians to the works of sociologists, theorists of federalism, city planners, progressive Catholics like Maritain and Mounier — in short, a cross-section of some of the most important philosophical currents in our time. He founded *Comunità*, one of the most flourishing magazines today and itself a model of graphic layout. There is not an architect, city-planner, sociologist, or industrial designer of importance in Italy today who has not worked for Olivetti and learned from him. In his last years he was absorbed in developing the Canavese region. Moving from the communal and Christian philosophy of Maritain and Mounier, and absorbing that part of Socialist ideology which was not repugnant to his religious conscience, he arrived at the idea of a concrete community, a truly democratic state in capsule form, neither dominated by the mechanics of the parties of the masses nor rigidly arranged in fictitious administrative units like the communes and the provinces. He was for a community “neither too large nor too small, territorially defined, with vast powers so as to give to all activities that indispensable coordination, that efficiency, that respect for the human personality, for culture and art, which had already been realized in a single industry.” Industry was to be the primary economic element in this community, in which all



power and wealth would be harmoniously integrated, and which would serve as the basis for a federalist state. Olivetti put his dreams to work: established social centres with a vast program of social and cultural activities in some hundred villages; distributed thousands of books, papers, and magazines; made the media of television and films accessible to all; made available reproductions of masterpieces of art. Throughout his region and to the humblest mountain hamlets he brought culture — an incredible program as it appeared to those who came to witness it and who came away fascinated if not convinced. He showed what could be accomplished by a wise distribution of power on the level of community planning, in the development of agriculture and cooperatives, and even of a sort of democratic *kolkhoz* in a village with old anarchical traditions. He embarked on a plan for the complete urban renovation of the Canavese region which is exemplary in its field. He wanted everything to be beautiful, and the signs of his good taste are everywhere; in the huge plant at Ivrea, in the new factory at Pozzuoli (an example of Olivetti's interest in the Italian South), in the small village machine shops, and in the social centres of tiny Alpine communities. He cared nothing for (in fact was irritated by) warnings that such beauty was not understood and was being squandered on the peasant villages. He felt that his efforts would bear fruit; and he was right. It is difficult to measure just how much the peasant's existence has changed, but today in these villages it is no longer strange to find works of modern art, reading centres well supplied with the best known books and magazines on cultural matters, and small factories embodying the most functional and aesthetic concepts of architecture. These mountain-folk, peasants and factory workers alike, today are deeply interested in and actively discuss international affairs, social reform, and the arts. They are no longer outside the domain of history and the drift of world affairs.

Olivetti sought to carry out his social experiments on a wider scale. He hoped that his movement, having gained political support locally, would secure representation in

Parliament and alter somewhat the focus of national government. But his hopes in this direction ended in the obvious and predictable defeat of the appeal to the intellect by the historically ultra-conservative political machine. He encountered great difficulty and great bitterness. But he was not one to give up easily. Death — an unkind one — struck him while he was still young, while he was rallying his forces to carry on the battle once again; it abruptly ended his role as leader in a great social experiment. Perhaps it was fitting, for what man must do is this: he must seek God and truth tirelessly and fearlessly, and without real hope of ever finding God or truth.

I, who paint this brief portrait, was for several years in charge of the cultural program which Adriano Olivetti had undertaken in the Canavese region. I did not believe in everything he believed in, for I had different cultural roots and tendencies. Often I would be in disagreement with him and, thanks to my quarrelsome nature, would find my diversity of opinion difficult to hide. But since I deeply esteemed Adriano Olivetti, it is not for me to judge the merit of his only partially complete socio-political experiment. Time and historical perspective will pass judgment soon enough. However, I believe in the validity of personal opinion. Let me therefore state mine: while working for this industrialist, heading a program close to his heart, never once did I feel hampered or unfree in my decisions. Whoever is familiar with big industry and big business (in any nation) with its conscious and unconscious attack on the personality, the intellect, and personal freedom, will accept this remark as one of the many proofs of Adriano Olivetti's worth, and of his meaning to Italian industry and culture. Many who like myself are in a position to state a similar opinion will feel his loss, a loss affecting everyone.

Paternalist, power-loving, ambitious. Rather futile accusations for a man of Olivetti's calibre. It seems incredible that he should have been the object of them. These qualities are dangerous and pernicious when they are not tempered by the courage to look within oneself and when their possessor is lacking in humility and the desire to understand

and respect his neighbor. Olivetti certainly loved power; and he was ambitious, as are all those who seek to create something. Were there but more men like him: full of light and nuances, men in whom pride borders on humility, joy on suffering, malice on candor; men who give unstintingly of themselves in the battles of the spirit. Many have attempted to explain his temperament in terms of his family roots: his father was Jewish and his mother from the Val-dese — it has been said that this cultural background made him sensitive to both Christian and socialist ideals. But this cannot be more than a part of the explanation; the entire scope of his character needs be explained in more complex terms.

Here then was a man — to conclude this discussion — who abounded in virtue and was not without his faults. Industry is the most burning reality of our world. There is no doubt that in all industrial societies man is inextricably enmeshed in rigorously automatic requirements. But the struggle between man and machine is no longer the same as it was some thirty years ago. Today we have the very pronounced factors of prosperity and conformity, the individual and the masses, prefabricated and true culture, bureaucracy and invention, and so forth. Olivetti was deeply conscious of all these aspects of the struggle, so conscious in fact that it might even appear that his concern was, in the final analysis, more significant than what he accomplished concretely. But his philosophy became valid just because he actually put it into practice — taking it out of the rhetorical sphere and placing it in the stream of reality. He got along on little sleep and found restfulness in others distasteful. The problem he wrestled with still exists, and will remain unsolved until there are many men like Adriano Olivetti willing to immerse themselves in it. And it would be well for such men to receive the special attention of political leaders (Marxist, Conservative, Liberal, Christian, or whatever) who are today so inept at reconstructing society in terms of modern ideals and needs. The world of big industry, composed of a series of islands fast becoming continents, is essentially one of great potential well-being



geared to production and consumption for mass markets, and the old socialist arguments are outmoded. However, we cannot afford to forget the misery and social injustice which were the birth-pangs of the Industrial Revolution. There is in every historical age an image of the world about us with which we must reckon, whether it be to accept it or to modify it, and upon which the cultural dialectic hinges. Today injustices are much more subtle, and the relative positions of wealth and poverty have changed greatly. This Adriano Olivetti, Christian Socialist, concrete Utopian, astute dreamer, capitalist prodigal with his own money, reader of the Bible and the social philosophers, capable money-maker, able to command and to listen humbly, humanist without literary complacency, well knew. It remains for us — learning from him what we can — to continue the work which he began.





